

# A HISTORY OF THE RUTLAND, VERMONT HALLOWEEN PARADE

*Compiled by Kirk Hastings*



Photo: Kirk Hastings

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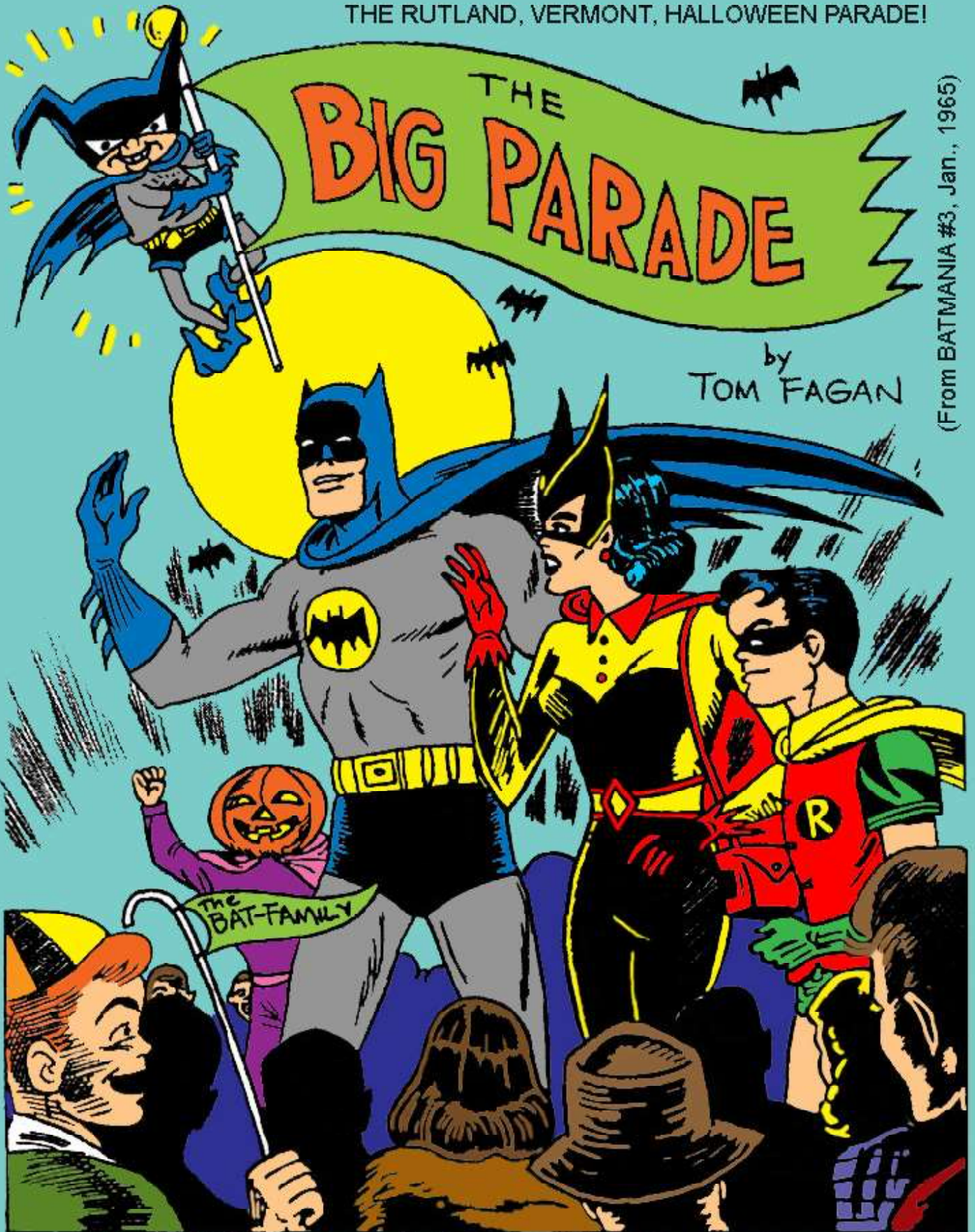
Photo: Rutland Herald

# The Annual Rutland Halloween Parade



by  
TOM FAGAN

(From BATMANIA #3, Jan., 1965)



**From a fanzine article written by Tom Fagan in 1964. Art: Biljo White.  
(Tom Fagan was the Associate Editor of BATMANIA from 1964 to 1967.)**

**H**alloween! An evening when druids, denevers, virdulacs and other anthropophoghist hosts emerge from a world of midnight madness to cavort about on this the highest of the high holidays.

And winging his way amongst them, straight from the pages of DETECTIVE COMICS for a single night of mirthful merriment, is the awesome figure of the mighty Batman.

At least that's what happens in Rutland, a Vermont community of some 18,000 souls, where Batman over the past few years has become the traditional trademark of the Rutland Recreation Department's annual Halloween Parade.

Every year, this parade has increased in scope, size and color, to a point where it is now the largest parade event of its type, not only in Rutland, but throughout the entire state of Vermont as well.

Thousands now march over concrete pathways in Rutland City each Halloween Eve. Thousands more cram corners and jostle for viewing space as the progression hoves into view after the customary 6:30 p.m. starting time.

As the parade has grown, so too has Batman's important role in it. The legendary crimefighter from Gotham was featured aboard one of the more spectacular float entries of the year 1961.

But so popular was Batman's appearance that John William Cioffredi, Recreation Commissioner, and this writer as the department's Halloween Committee Chairman, decided to make the caped crime-crusher an annual parade personage.

Public response was such that after the second appearance of Batman [1962], it was further decided to make him the trademark symbol of the marching extravaganza.

This year [1963] Batman was selected as Parade Marshall, a position which as long as the parades continue in Rutland he will hold each and every Halloween.

Since Batman made his appearance in Rutland, the surrounding area parade-going public has further been treated to the sight of the super-charged Batmobile prowling the march route.

Robin The Boy Wonder, fittingly enough, has taken his place alongside his fighting companion. Batwoman has appeared on the scene, joined anew this year by Bat-Girl. Even Bat-Mite has twice shown up for the Recreation Department's gloved salute to the Eve of All-Hallows. And at one time, Rutland's Batman was aided by a diminutive character known as Belfrey The Bat.

It was not ever so. How did this all come about when not even one of the Batman Family took part in the first annual Halloween Parade in 1960? Quite by chance it happened. And this is the way it took place.

Always an enthusiastic parade watcher himself, Rutland's Batman-to-be stood shivering that cool crisp October night, having heard a parade

was to pass by. With him was Belfry, a tiny miss, costumed and eager, to watch also. The fire whistle in the town below barked its command for the march to begin. And it did. School children from the elementary schools trooped into view. Music of two bands pepped up the procession of horrors and haunts. Cioffredi and the mayor of the time [Dan J. Healy] led the way, riding aboard a jaunty jeep. Soon it was over -- all too soon for the likings of Batman and Belfrey.

"Could have been better," remarked Belfrey as she and her adult companion walked home trick or treating along the way, and being pleasantly taken aback as a young boy suddenly whipped out a flaming jack o' lantern at them. "You're right," agreed Batman, "It could have, indeed." Thus an idea was born that night, an idea that would have ramifications on Rutland's Halloween celebrations for years to come.

Everything was not crystalized at this point by any matter of means. Batman talked over the matter with this writer, and together they took their ideas to Cioffredi. Cioffredi was more than receptive, for he had been searching for a way to make the upcoming second annual march "a better one, indeed."

Being an "idea man" is nice, but one has to be prepared to carry them out when called upon to do so. When Commissioner Cioffredi asked this writer to serve as Halloween Committee Chairman, there was no turning back.

Neither could the Batman. He was in the action for keeps at Cioffredi's command.

The idea had been to lend the parade a central figure, one that would incorporate the eeriness and excitement of a night like Halloween. Once this figure was established in the minds of the local parade-going public matters would continue from there, was the general concensus of opinion.

Such was to be the case as later events would prove. But hard work was involved, and though it was a labor of love at times it was to be a frustrating one.

Cioffredi agreed the selection of Batman as a parade symbol was an excellent one. It was decided to keep the identity of the Rutland figure a top priority secret. To this day the identities of all the Bat Family members who have appeared in the parades remain just that -- secret. Though there is much speculation concerning "Who are they?"

Rutland's Batman (he's always played by the same man, who suggested the idea in the first place) can recall buying and reading the first issue of DETECTIVE COMICS (no. 27, 1939) that featured Batman. Though he lacks this issue, his collection is a large one, including not only DETECTIVE issues but WORLD'S FINEST, BATMAN, STAR SPANGLED COMICS (that had Robin as lead feature), ALL STAR COMICS, and JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA comics, all having Batman as a character. His prize

possession is DETECTIVE COMICS No. 33, that featured Batman's origin.

As National's Batman is a lawman, so too is Rutland's "Bruce Wayne For A Day". The Rutland Batman is a duly sworn deputy sheriff. Other similarities include height of six feet and weight of 180 pounds, given as physical descriptions of Batman in one issue of DETECTIVE COMICS long ago.

Thinking about being Batman is one thing; becoming him quite another. The first and most immediate problem was that of costuming. As Batman costumes are unavailable commercially, one had to be hand-made. Accomplishing this took time and patience. Willing hands stitched cape and cowl. Boots and gloves were outfitted with extra lengths of materials. The Bat Chest Emblem and utility belt were fashioned with items salvaged from closet and attic.

While this was taking place, this writer and others worked at a furious pace "Cabbage Night" (the evening before Halloween), past midnight and into the dawn to build the Batman float. The entire float project took all of Halloween afternoon to complete, before the float trundled off to take its place in the 1961 parade line-up.

Batman himself was having his troubles. The last stitch of his costume was woven into place, but the time was 6:21. Lacking a car, the Batman did the only thing he could do -- run several city blocks to the parade site.

The fire whistle had already hooted its clarion call as the caped figure raced along darkened streets. His sudden appearance at various points caused adults and children to draw back and watch large-eyed at his passing. Cars braked to quick stops as the figure darted across intersections.

Out of breath, Rutland's Batman arrived on the parade scene. There were cries of "Look, it's Batman!" and "Hey, where's Robin?"

As Batman took his place on the float he was greeted by Belfry, who was to be his companion during the first appearance of the Legendary Lawman. Behind them was a huge reproduction of BATMAN comics, depicting a gigantic Batman and a diminutive Bat-Mite. The poster even bore the inscription "12c", for comic books had risen in price from a dime just a short time before.

It was an evening of musical gaiety and colorful highlights. For instead of two bands there were five. Instead of no floats at all, there were several. Providing the musical prologue for the Batman float was the Scarlet Knights of Rutland, an adult drum and bugle corps. Flags flew, drums thundered and trumpets snarled in colorful array before the 1961 parade faded into oblivion on the batwings of enchanted time.

Enthused at the public response Cioffredi, this writer, and Batman immediately began making plans for the 1962 coming of Batman to

Rutland. A letter written to National Comics and carried in a subsequent issue of BATMAN gave the Rutland parade country-wide publicity.

News coverage by the Rutland Daily Herald awakened Vermont to the fact that Rutland had a drawing card on its hands as far as Halloween was concerned. Television personnel were on hand to record the 1962 procession of phantasmagoria.

It was a successful repeat performance for the Rutland Recreation Department. Again thousands of school age chiropters, nightjars and cauldron-tenders were on the march. Floats appeared in delightful profusion, and bands this time were six in number, along with an adult precision marching group. This time the Batmobile cruised into view for the parade lineup. A powerful Olds Starfire black convertible had been properly fitted with a huge Bat-Head grill designed for the occasion.

Making his debut alongside the Rutland Batman was Robin the Boy Wonder, much to the delight of the onlookers. Robin's costume matched that of his comic book counterpart, adding even more color to the Batman parade section.

Halloween 1963 arrived. This time Batman had the aid of Night Legion Rutland County Charter Chapter, Inc., one of the city's more active social groups.

With the help of Harry M.D. Levins of Rutland, now serving as a lieutenant with the U.S. Army in Germany, a remarkable float backdrop was prepared. Levin's artistic hand reproduced a mammoth Bat Symbol as is seen in the title logo of BATMAN comics. The Bat-Mite, riding a Halloween broom, was sketched in as the poster's central figure. Heads of Batwoman and Robin were drawn to give the entire poster well-balanced proportions. The finished product truly appeared as if the work had been done by Bob Kane himself. Levins, with other Legionnaires, then fashioned bat cut-outs to line the sides of the float, again just barely finishing up the task before parade time.

More floats, more bands, more marchers and more onlookers sums up the 1963 procession. The Batman float was particularly well-received, for now with Batman and Robin stood Batwoman and Bat-Mite.

It was after this that Cioffredi decided to make Batman the Parade Marshall. And so he was for 1964's "unreal world come to life".

The evening was just right for a parade. Skies were black, the temperature crisp but not cold, and Rutland City awaited the parade's coming.

Night Legionnaires, again working right up to parade time, prepared the latest Batman float. The idea was taken from the Batman Family portrait seen on the back cover of the last BATMAN ANNUAL comic book [No. 2]. Two extremely large bat cut-outs were mounted high above the float base. Liberally sprinkled with silver, red and gold sparkle dust, the signs proclaimed "BATMAN FAMILY". Smaller bat cut-outs again lined the sides of the float. A park bench was locked into place on the float, and the base of the vehicle was

in turn covered with “grass”, similar to that used on theatrical properties.

Batwoman held Bat-Mite as she regally took the center spot of honor on the bench. Batman stood to one side, and Robin to the other. Also taking her place in this family portrait was Bat-Girl, whom the crowds found to be a charming addition to the parade of personages.

Again bigger in size the parade was accorded the cheers and handclaps of watchers. As the Batman float passed by at one point, a mother said to her small son, “Look, it’s Batman! I used to read about him.”

“Where?” asked the boy, and then catching sight of the caped figures, shouted out, “It really is Batman! It really is!”

Interestingly enough, Belfrey The Bat, absent from the parades for three years, flitted back into the lineup again this year. As two pumpkins held hands in a cornfield, Belfrey stood watching them, providing Pad ’73’s float entry with the theme, “Three Is a Crowd”.

What of the future?

Commissioner Gordon, who missed out on a 1964 appearance, almost is a certain bet to be present next year. The Joker has requested to get into the act too.

Though heroes from rival publishing companies do not meet up with one another in each other’s books, such may not be the case in Rutland. Captain America “wants in”. And if he can make the scene, the Rutland Recreation Department has already assured him he’ll be more than welcome.

Present plans also call for the awarding of a Batman Float Award Rotating Trophy. This will be given to the best float presentation, with the winners to keep the trophy in their possession for a year. The Batman group, it is already agreed upon mutually, will not be eligible in forthcoming contests, since it is a well-established parade fixture.

All this goes to prove that Batman over his 25 years of comic book history has captured the fancy of both young and old alike. We in Rutland want to keep things that way, and in our own manner work toward that goal each Halloween.

Excitement shining in young eyes and smiles of recognition on older faces continues to make the time and effort of having Batman in our parade well worth the effort.

When Halloween again descends on Rutland City, Batman will be there with the best of them.

Should you be in the vicinity pay us a visit; the invitation is always open. Better yet come and march with some of the most avid Batman fans in America today.

We’ll be looking for you!

**Tom Fagan**

Rutland, Vermont

November, 1964

## Downtown Rutland Closes Streets for 58th Annual Halloween Parade



*This enormous T-Rex float made its way down Wales Street as part of the 2015 Rutland Halloween Parade, made by students at Proctor High School.*



Photos: Rutland Herald

**Saturday, October 28, 2017, 6:30 p.m.**—The Rutland Recreation & Parks Department's 58th Annual Halloween Parade is scheduled to take over Downtown Rutland Saturday, Oct. 28, starting at 6:30 p.m. Line up begins at 5:30 p.m. at the firehouse. The parade route follows several streets: Madison Street and Strongs Avenue to Wales Street, left onto West Street, left onto Merchants Row, and ends at the plaza, in front of WalMart. With a theme of "Halloween," floats are sure to be scary, as they are required to be fully decorated in the spirit of that theme!

Being held in the dark, this parade is unique and especially popular for the spooky holiday. Thousands of people will converge upon downtown Rutland to stake out a spot. Get to Rutland early, as parking can be difficult to find.

Parade judges will be awarding trophies in the following categories: Most Original – Superintendent's Trophy Best Costumed Marching Band; Best in Parade – Mayor's Trophy Best Costumed Marching Unit; Most Creative – Department Trophy Honorable Mention; and Tom Fagan award, sponsored by Initial Ideas.

The streets will be packed with kids and adults, many dressed in their own costumes in the spirit of the event, lining the streets for the perfect spot to watch the parade. Candy will be handed out by participants walking in the parade, so kids, bring a bag.

The Rutland Parade has a comical history that elevates well beyond ordinary Halloween parades, thanks to all the superheroes.

Tom Fagan, a local writer and comic book fan, is credited with having a hand in the parade's early development, according to an October 2006 article. In 1970, Fagan is said to have persuaded his friends, who were comic book authors and artists from New York City, to dress up in superhero costumes and take part in the annual Rutland Halloween Parade. Tom Fagan passed away in 2008, but he will be forever tied to the area's most ghoulish event.

"Tom was a comics fan supreme and chairman of the Rutland Halloween parade. Those two occupations were responsible for creating a parade with a fair number of superheroes marching along and riding on floats both in the comics and in real life," Craig Shutt said in "Ask Mr. Silver Age: Tom Fagan," a November 2008 Comics Buyer's Guide report.

Since then, the Rutland Halloween Parade has been the setting for a vastly disproportionate number of superhero comic books. As of this past summer, the Rutland Recreation Department has devoted a space in its new location in the Courcelle Building in honor of the comics, displaying several of them in an ongoing exhibit. See it at 16 North Main Street Extension, Rutland.


# The traditional Rutland parade route

Halloween Parade 2018


22,451 views

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PARADE ROUTE




Halloween Parade Route




Officer

☒


PARADE STAGING



Road Closed, No thru traffic



Road Closed, No thru traffic



Road Closed, No thru traffic

PARADE STARTING TIME:  
6:30 PM

PARADE ROUTE:  
Madison St. & Strong's Ave. to  
Wales St., left to West St., left onto  
Merchants Row ending at the plaza.

Made with Google My Maps

Photo: Rutland Halloween Parade Committee

# Ghosts!



Photos: Rutland Herald

Marcy Galligan

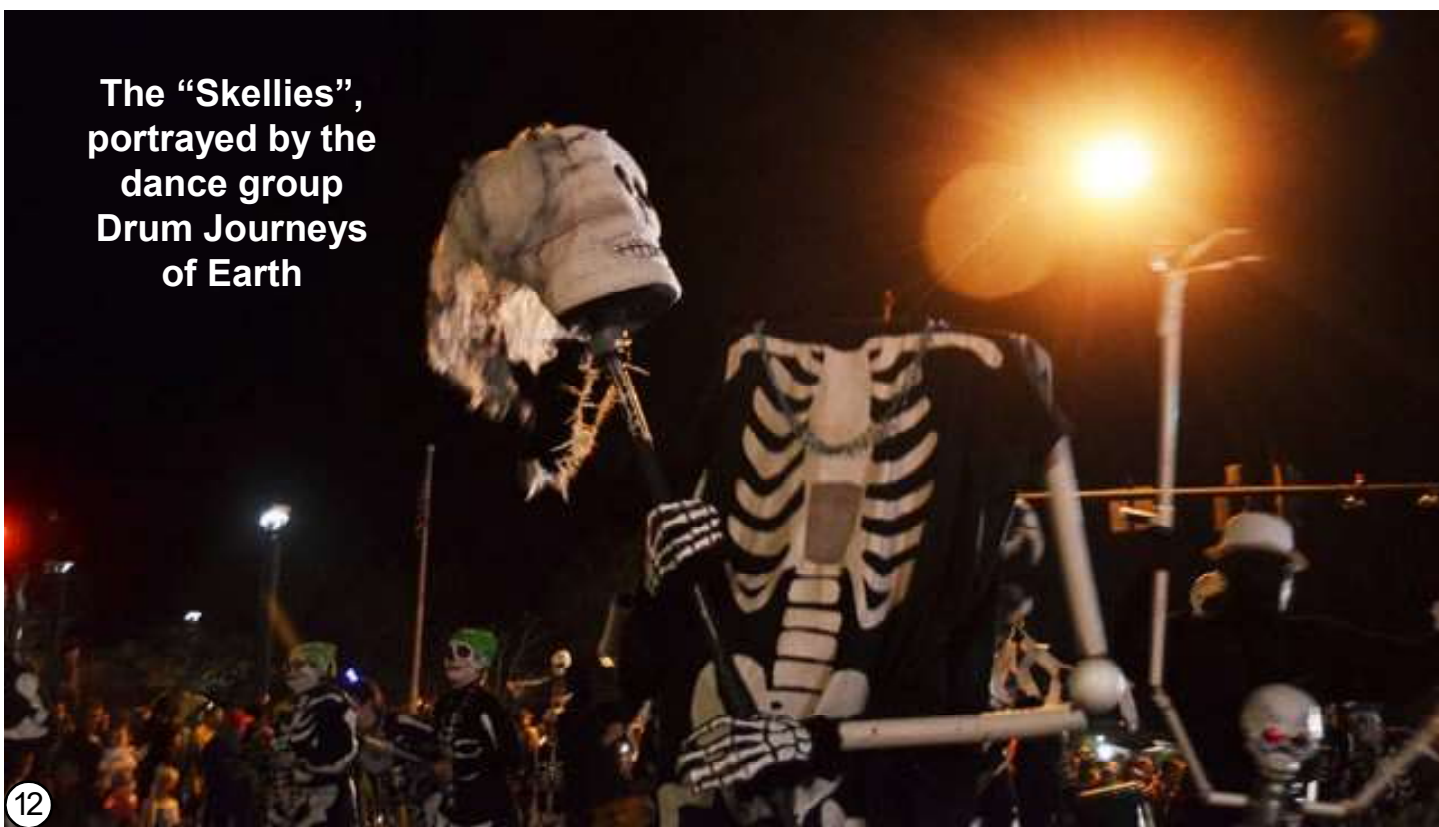
# Skellies!





Photos: Rutland Herald

The "Skellies",  
portrayed by the  
dance group  
Drum Journeys  
of Earth





Photos: Rutland Herald





Photos:  
Rutland Herald

**(above) A Skellie juggles torches as she rides a unicycle**  
**(below) Costumed revelers from the 2018 parade**



**(right) Tom Fagan's daughter Deana as "Bat-Mite", in the 1961 parade**



Photos: Rutland Herald



**(left) Wendy Pini as "Crystal", and two other Halloween Parade participants, 1973**



Photos:  
Rutland  
Herald

Spider-man came to Rutland to participate in the annual Halloween parade a few years ago.



*(right)*  
Parade  
sign



*(below)*  
Parade  
banner

Photos: Mark Griffin

RUTLAND REC. & PARKS DEPT.



ANNUAL · HALLOWEEN · PARADE



*(left)* Parade backdrop from 1974 featuring “E-Man”

*(below)* Bob Poli as “Prince Valiant”, 1970

Photos: Alan Bradford



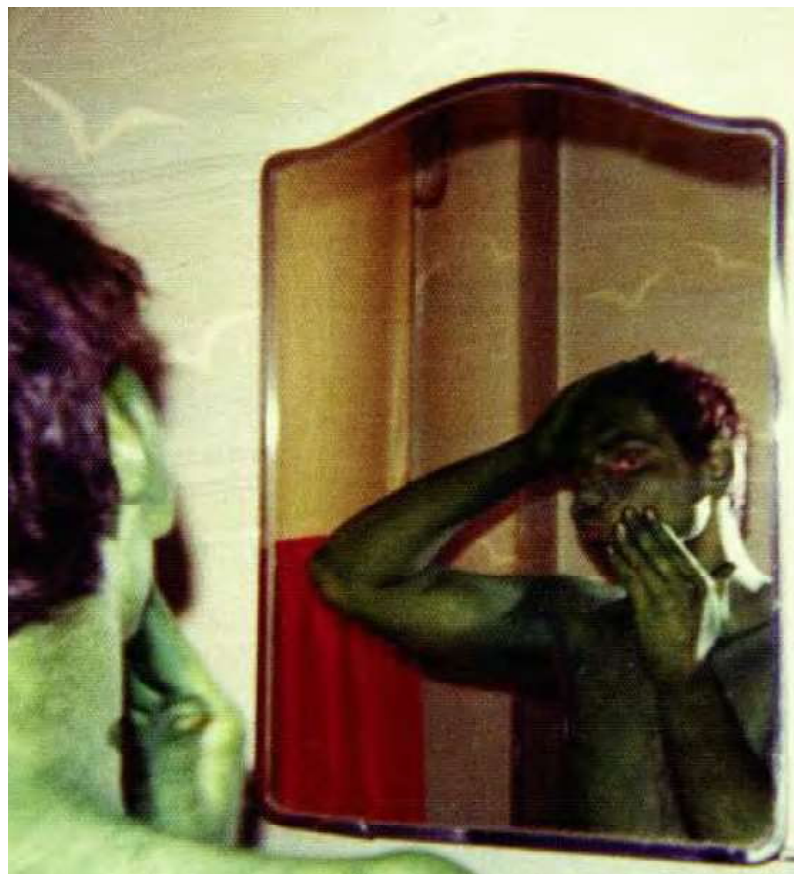


*(above)*  
**“Mr. and Mrs. Hulk”, from 1974!**

Photo: Kirk Hastings



*(right)* **“The Hulk”  
 getting made up, 1974**



Photos: Alan Bradford



**(left) “Loki” and  
a pink gorilla,  
from 1973**

Photos: Alan Bradford

**(right) Marty Greim  
and a parade  
backdrop of Conan  
the Barbarian  
fighting Cthuthu,  
1970**





**(left) Mercy Van Vlack as  
“Batgirl”, with Tom Hegeman  
as “The Flying Dutchman”  
(1979)**

Photos: Alan Bradford

**(right) Pete Bradford as  
“Thor”, with  
“Captain America”, 1971**





Photos: Alan Bradford



**(above) Phil Seuling as “Captain Marvel”, 1970**

**(above) Phil Seuling/Captain Marvel in battle with Tom Fagan/Nighthawk, 1970!**



**(left)  
Tom Fagan  
Halloween  
Parade  
Award,  
2018**



**(right)  
Nikki Adams (of  
the Rutland  
Recreation Dept.)  
with the  
Tom Fagan Award  
(2018)**

Photos: Kirk Hastings



**Rich Morrissey as  
“The Spectre”, 1974**



Photo: Rutland Herald

**April Cioffi, organizer of the Rutland  
Halloween Parade (2017)**

**(below) Al Bradford as “The Scarecrow”, and “Thulsa Doom” (1974)**



Photos: Alan Bradford



**(left) “The Scarlet Witch”,  
1970**

Photos: Alan Bradford



**(right) Tom  
Watkins  
as  
“Dr. Doom”,  
1970**



Photo: PEGTV

# Tom Fagan



Photo:  
Google Maps



Dear Editor: Rutland, Vermont, a community of some 18,000 people, had the fun and excitement of BATMAN featured in its past Hallowe'en festivities. The Rutland Recreation Department, headed by John W. Cioffredi, sponsored a parade with over 1,000 marchers. Included in the float lineup was one depicting BATMAN.

Our "Batman" (who, like your hero, prefers to remain unidentified, and who has read the feature since its beginning) suggested the idea for the float. Hours were spent fashioning a costume, and drawing and painting a seven-foot square poster depicting BATMAN and BAT-MITE.

Band members pounded on drums, shouting "Hi, BATMAN!" or "I don't see that spotlight in the sky!" or "Where's ROBIN?" As the float passed by, several fathers, holding children too small to march, pointed to the black-caped mystery man, saying, "That's BATMAN. I used to read about him. He looks just like he does in the comic books."

I don't know how many BATMAN comics were sold the next day, in Rutland, but this still proves BATMAN and ROBIN are popular figures.

Tom Fagan, Rutland, Vt.

Committeeman, Rutland Recreation Dept.  
*(Our thanks to all our fans in Rutland. We hope to continue bringing you the stories that have made BATMAN and ROBIN such popular figures everywhere.—Ed.)*

(From BATMAN #148, June, 1962)

## BATMAN'S HOT-LINE

(From DETECTIVE COMICS #327, May, 1964)

Before we hang up the HOT-LINE for this month, we have an interesting communication from *Batman* fan Tom Fagan, dispatched from 22 Nichols Street, Rutland, Vermont:

*Batman* is no stranger to Rutland, Vermont, residents, be they comic-book readers or not.

Indeed your caped, crime-fighting hero has become an annual Halloween tradition in this community of over 18,000 people. And they look forward to seeing the "legendary lawman from Gotham City."

*Batman* makes an annual appearance in Rutland each Halloween Eve. His visit is made possible by the Rutland Recreation Department, headed by John W. Cioffredi, recreation commissioner.

Seeking a central figure to represent the Recreation Department's annual Halloween parade, *Batman* was chosen as the most colorful and exciting of well-known mystery figures.

Chosen to play the role, but remaining nameless in keeping with comicdom tradition, Rutland's *Batman* is appropriately a law enforcement officer himself.

This gentleman has ridden in each Halloween parade in Rutland since its inception. The idea met with such approval, there is currently the suggestion that in years to come "Batman" be made the parade marshal, replacing the Mayor and the recreation commissioner who customarily have served in that capacity.

Deemed the most popular parade in Rutland and one which attracts an audience from a wide area, this year's "fourth annual" event held even more exciting things for *Batman* fans.

Not only did the cowled crime-crusher appear on a float sponsored by the Night Legion, Rutland County Charter Chapter, but there were other familiar figures as well. Their appearance has been in demand for a long time.

Consequently, riding with *Batman* were *Robin*, *Batwoman*, and *Bat-Mite*. All were instant crowd-pleasers, thus almost sure to return in future Halloween processions in Rutland.

Photos: DC Comics

Letters written by  
 Tom Fagan  
 published in two  
 Batman comic books



(From the letters page of BATMAN #237, December, 1971. The story featured in that issue was "Night of the Reaper".)

Dear Julie:

"Night of the Reaper" has a genesis in reality. The Halloween bash at Rutland happens, every year. It's quite a freaky experience, walking down the main street of this really pleasant New England town, and suddenly, you come upon a parade and there are *Superman*, *Captain Marvel*, *Batman*, *Thor*—the whole pantheon of super-heroes. All around them are high school bands and drum major-ettes who look so sweet, so innocent, so absolutely wholesome *American* that a sentimental man might shed a tear.

A bunch of us went last year in Mark Hanerfeld's minibus. The trip would make another story. (Once, on the way, we encountered a crew of gun-nuts—in a restaurant parking lot, yet. One of them fixed a steely—well, tinfolly—gaze on a certain young writer and drawled, "Hey, boy, what for yew don' cut yewr hair?" The writer started to laugh; then the guy pulled a single-action .44 revolver from beneath his jacket. We all grinned—very friendly grins there, ha ha—and Mark handled the minibus as though it were a racing model Porsche.)

Anyway, after the parade, Tom Fagan throws a monumental party. On the occasion I'm describing, it lasts a solid 48 hours, and friend, if you have a taste for festivities, it ought not to have been missed. I mean, we *did* party! Explored the two-dozen-plus rooms of Tom's fantastic house (like something from Lovecraft) and drifted into the lovely, autumnal woods surrounding the Fagan property. Laughed. Sang. Climbed cliffs and threw a boomerang and played touch-football and, probably, discussed the Meaning of Life.

At one point, Al Weiss, Gerry Conway, Berni Wrightson, Eliot Wagner and myself found ourselves in the forest. It was, I'd guess, midnight. Quiet, except for the odd trillings and gentle stirrings and distant sounds that may have been whistles, wheezes, or groans. And dark. So dark the eye, hungry for something to seem conjured up shapes that loomed in the night.

"You remember that weird dude back at the party?" Berni asked. "That cat with the orange wig?"

Sure, we answered.

"What if he's a murderer? A maniac? And what if he doesn't like comix artists and writers? And what if he's sneaking through the trees right now?"

We heard the rustlings, those stirrings. . .

Later, when we were safely in the midst of the merrymakers again, having completed a rather astonishing run, I promised I'd use Berni's sadistic fantasy as a *Batman* plot.

And a few weeks ago, that estimable science-fiction writer and friend, Harlan Ellison, suggested I do a story about Nazi war criminals. I put Harlan's and Berni's ideas together and *voila!* "The Night of the Reaper!"

But most of the credit should go to Tom Fagan and the people of Rutland. Man, that was a good week end!

Peace.

—DENNY O'NEIL

Address communications to LETTERS TO THE BATMAN, National Periodical Publications, 909 Third Ave., New York, N.Y., 10022.

Photos: DC Comics



Photo: Marvel Comics



Tom  
Fagan

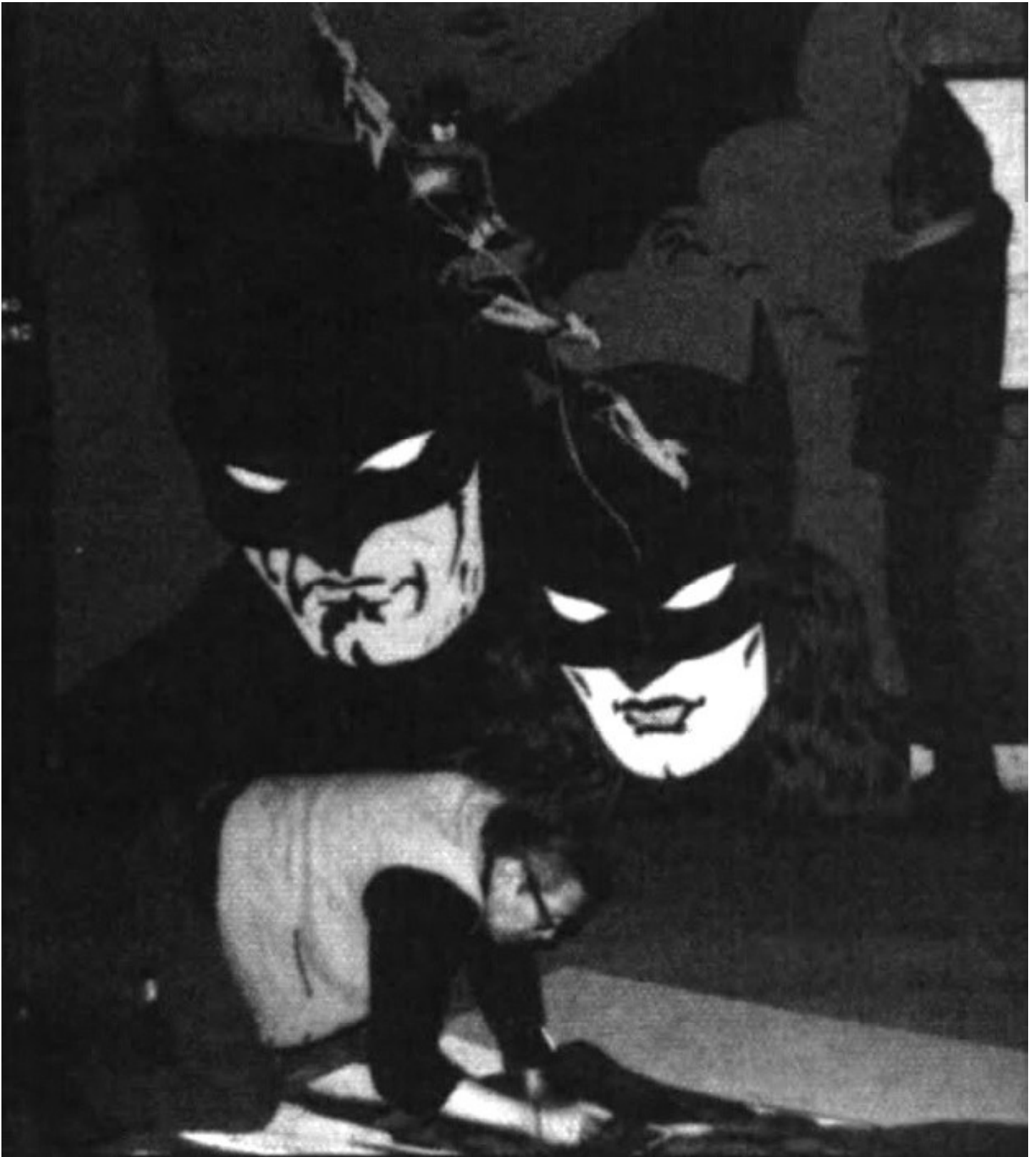
Photos:  
PEGTV



Photo: PEGTV



Tom Fagan, in his younger days working at *The Rutland Herald* newspaper



Tom Fagan working on a Halloween Parade backdrop,  
with another painted panel and Marty Greim  
visible in the background (1970)

RUTLAND, VERMONT, SATURDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 1, 1969.



Batman, Gotham City's famous foe of crime, looks on as the infamous Jack O'Lantern reveals his true identity at Friday night's Halloween Parade. Batman refused to reveal his true identity for fear of hurting his fight against crime, but O'Lantern freely admitted that his real name was Bruce Wing (Herald photo - McIntyre)



(left)  
From an  
October,  
2017  
PEGTV  
(Rutland, VT)  
documentary  
film on the  
Rutland  
Halloween  
Parades

(left)  
Photo: PEGTV



The Loretto Home at 59 Meadow Street, Rutland, where Tom spent some of his later retirement years.

Photos: Google Maps

The Mountain View Center at 9 Haywood Avenue, Rutland, where Tom spent his final years.



Photo: Alan Bradford



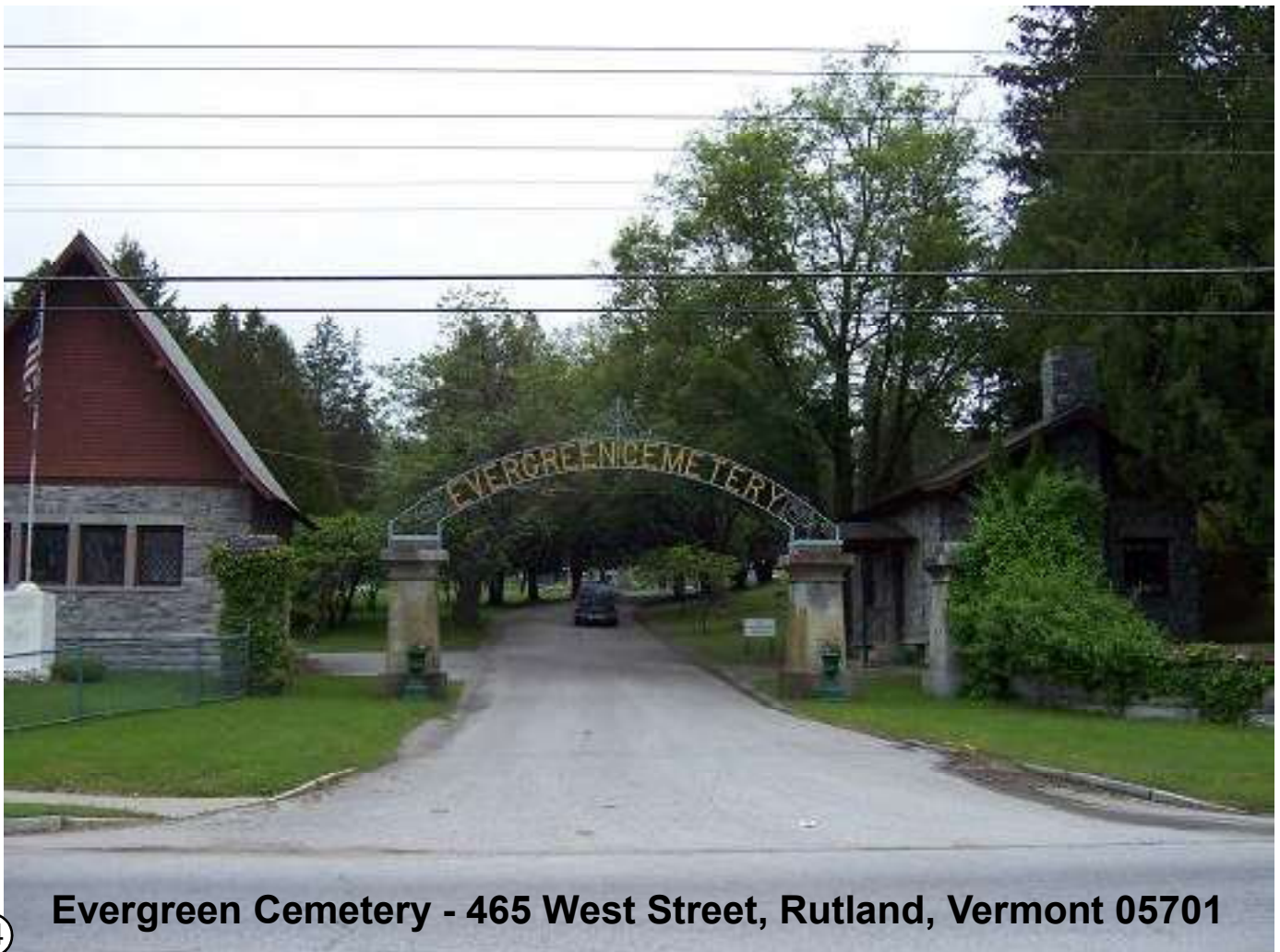
A fanzine tribute to Tom, by Al Bradford (2008)

Photo: Mark Griffin



Tom Fagan's tombstone (combined with others)

Photo: Google Maps



Evergreen Cemetery - 465 West Street, Rutland, Vermont 05701

# M. Thomson Fagan - Obituaries

**M.** Thomson “Tom” Fagan, 77, of Rutland died Oct. 21, 2008, at Genesis Mountain View Center. He was born in Rutland on Feb. 2, 1931, the son of Clarence E. and Mildred (Thomson) Fagan. He was a graduate of Rutland High School and a 1953 graduate of the University of Vermont. Mr. Fagan was employed by the Rutland Herald for several years and later by Tuttle Publishing Co. He was a nationally recognized collector of Paper Americana and authority on the actor James Dean, as well as Southeast Asian literature. He helped create and was involved in the annual Rutland Halloween parade, and appeared in comic book stories published by DC and Marvel comics.

Survivors include a daughter, Deana Fagan of Fair Haven; a brother, Clarence Fagan Jr. of Vergennes; several nieces, nephews and cousins. He was predeceased by his wife, Mary (Barrett) Fagan, in 1998 (born 1915).

The funeral service will be held at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 29, at the Clifford Funeral Home. Friends may call from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 28, at the funeral home. Memorial contributions may be made to Rutland County Humane Society, 738 Stevens Road, Pittsford, VT 05763.

— *Published in The Rutland Herald on October 23, 2008*

## FROM THE FUNERAL HOME GUEST BOOK

“The Fagan home was on “doctor’s row” of Grove St. ...”

- **Judith and Jessanne Wyman**

“Mr. Halloween, everyone here will miss you dearly ...”

- **Marty Crilly**

Longtime comics fan and founder of the Rutland, Vt., Halloween Parade, Tom Fagan, died Oct. 21. He was 77. According to The Rutland Herald, Fagan was known as “Mr. Halloween” in the town where he founded a parade in 1961, featuring marchers dressed as their favorite comics characters. The event, billed as the biggest Halloween parade in the state, proved so successful that Fagan convinced writers and artists for Marvel, DC, and other companies to attend. Each company, as well as various fan publications, publicized the event in various ways, including a series of stories set in and around the parade from both Marvel and DC, each featuring an appearance by Fagan, making him the first character to appear at both companies. Mr. Silver Age focused on those stories in his column in CBG #1512 (Nov. 8, 2002). While Fagan had jokingly suggested that if he died near Halloween, he’d like to ride in his casket in the parade, his daughter, Deana, said that that won’t happen as burial is scheduled for Oct. 29. “He probably would have been happy to be in the parade,” she told the Herald. “It’s kind of unfortunate that it didn’t work out better. The middle of the week is a better time for everyone.” In addition to his contributions to fandom, Fagan was a reporter and editor for *The Rutland Herald* for many years, covering the police and City Hall beats.

## TOM FAGAN

Tom Fagan is dead at the age of 77, and I probably need to explain to most of you who he was. Tom was a longtime resident of Rutland, Vermont and he was the mover and shaker most responsible for that city’s famous annual Halloween parades. As he explained in an interview last year, he’d always loved Halloween and he had a vision for what the town’s parade could be and set about to make it happen.

A lot of it involved filling the streets with comic book characters. Fagan promoted the idea in comic books and to comic book companies...and by the early seventies, the parade was awash with superheroes and villains. Writers and artists from the industry journeyed to Rutland to participate in the festivities, often in costume, and art began to imitate life: Many comic book stories were done that were set in Rutland involving DC and Marvel heroes actually attending. The illo above is from an issue of *Batman* in which the Caped Crusader went there...and the guy you see him talking to is Tom Fagan.

I never got to attend one of Tom's public parties but I always heard great things about them. We corresponded briefly in the seventies and you could tell from the way he wrote about the events that he was very proud of what he'd created. Here's an obit in the local paper there:

## Force behind city's Halloween parade, Tom Fagan, dies

*Rutland Herald* - By **Brent Curtis**, Herald Staff - Published: October 23, 2008

*Tom Fagan, known as "Mr. Halloween" in Rutland, helped begin the tradition of the Halloween parade in the city.*

Tom Fagan was a number of things during a lifetime of newspaper reporting, raising a family and assuming legendary status in the comic book community.

But in Rutland, where the 77-year-old lived before his death on Tuesday, he was known as "Mr. Halloween" — the man who helped create an All-Hallows-Eve procession of ghosts, ghouls and costumed greats in the 1950s that endures today as the biggest Halloween parade in the state.

The parade, which Fagan helped start in 1961, was so important to him that just a year ago he said not even death would be a fitting excuse for missing the event.

"I think if I pass over around Halloween time, I'll be riding in a casket in the parade," he said. "I'd be all for that, too."

Fagan won't get that chance — even though his idea piqued the interest of a parade organizer who wondered about setting aside a place of honor for him and a longtime friend and former co-worker who said Fagan would have loved the idea of attending the event posthumously.

"He would have loved that and, of course, he would have wanted the casket open — that's the kind of ghoulish guy he was," Nick Marro said chuckling at the imagery.

Fagan's daughter, Deana Fagan, hadn't heard that particular request — although she said her father talked often about having a Viking-styled funeral. But she said a parade ride would be in keeping with his sensibilities.

Unfortunately, she said Halloween fell two days too late to work with the family's plans for a funeral and burial Wednesday.

"He probably would have been happy to be in the parade. It's kind of unfortunate that it didn't work out better. The middle of the week is a better time for everyone," she said.

Growing up with a father who collected comics, dressed as Batman on Halloween and who wore nothing but black clothing the rest of the year, Deana Fagan said she got to know all of her father's eccentricities and obsessions.

As a young girl and teenager, she helped design and paint the backgrounds of Halloween Parade floats. Almost a half century later, she had to maneuver around a room decorated with superhero and monster memorabilia of all sorts during visits with her father at Loretto Home in Rutland.

Even her name is a reflection of her father's passions — Deana is a play on James Dean, a Fagan idol whose hairstyle he imitated.

"In some ways, he never stopped being a child," she said. "He enjoyed having fun. He didn't think he had to be a certain way just because of his age ... He's one of those people who made involvement in comics more likely for an adult. He made it legitimate."

That legitimacy came from the seriousness with which Fagan took his craft as a reporter and editor at the *Rutland Herald*, where he covered the police and City Hall beats for years.

The dichotomy of professional responsibility with a child-like curiosity and wonder might seem like an odd combination.

But in a newsroom filled with a cast of characters, Fagan fit in just fine, according to former co-worker Harry Levins.

Levins, who now works for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, said in an e-mail Wednesday that "Newsrooms of that era held many an eccentric, but Tom rose above mere eccentricity."

Some of the stories he recalled from the old days at the newspaper included "in jokes" sneaked into the newspaper and fictional reports — including a false wedding announcement that Fagan once snuck into the paper announcing the engagement of a girl named "Hook" to a man named "Fish."

"Naturally, the notice was headed 'Fish-Hook,'" Levins wrote. "Publisher Bob Mitchell sent a note to the newsroom (after publication) in which he said that the Fishes were moving to Omaha, Neb., and would never be heard from again."

Marro said Fagan was with him “watching for cops” when, as a young man, he hung 25 feet in the air off the Pine Street overpass to spray paint the eponymous words “Welcome to Happy Valley” on the gateway to the city’s southwest neighborhood.

But for all the colorful candid stories about Fagan, there are an equal number of professional tales.

“In Bennett’s absence, Tom would function as city editor,” Levins wrote. “He was marvelously patient with his young crew, and between puffs on his ever-present Lucky Strike, he would instruct us on court procedure, Rutland’s history and the finer points of the English language.”

Marro described Fagan as a “wonderful reporter” who had a sense of humor and also “a dark side that led him to the Halloween parade.”

Former Herald editor Kendall Wild said Fagan was a good reporter who not only cared about his work, but about the community he lived in.

In that sense, the parade, which celebrates its 49th year next Friday, represents his most crowning achievement.

The annual event attracted more than 10,000 people last year and has been visited by caped crusaders sent by DC Comics and Marvel Comics — two heavyweights in the comic world.

Perhaps an even bigger distinction and honor, both the Rutland parade and Fagan have appeared in the pages of such comics as “Batman” and “The Avengers.”

“Without Tom, there wouldn’t be a Halloween parade in Rutland,” Marro said. “That’s his legacy.”

— Contact Brent Curtis at [brent.curtis@rutlandherald.com](mailto:brent.curtis@rutlandherald.com)

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## M. Thomson Fagan

*Rutland Herald* | October 23, 2008

M. Thomson “Tom” Fagan, 77, of Rutland died Oct. 21, 2008, at Genesis Mountain View Center (9 Haywood Avenue, Rutland). He was born in Rutland on Feb. 2, 1931, the son of Clarence E. and Mildred (Thomson) Fagan. He was a graduate of Rutland High School and a 1953 graduate of the University of Vermont. Mr. Fagan was employed by *The Rutland Herald*.

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## Force Behind City’s Halloween Parade, Tom Fagan, Dies

*Rutland Herald* | October 23, 2008

By BRENT CURTIS - Herald Staff

Tom Fagan was a number of things during a lifetime of newspaper reporting, raising a family and assuming legendary status in the comic book community.

But in Rutland, where the 76-year-old lived before his death on Tuesday, he was known as “Mr. Halloween” — the man who helped create an All-Hallows-Eve procession of ghosts, ghouls and costumed greats in the 1950s that endures today as the biggest Halloween parade in the state.

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Growing up with a father who collected comics, dressed as Batman on Halloween and who wore nothing but black clothing the rest of the year, Deana Fagan said she got to know all of her father’s eccentricities and obsessions.

As a young girl and teenager, she helped design and paint the backgrounds of Halloween Parade floats. Almost a half century later, she had to maneuver around a room decorated with superhero and monster memorabilia of all sorts during visits with her father at Loretto Home in Rutland.

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That legitimacy came from the seriousness with which Fagan took his craft as a reporter and editor at the Rutland Herald, where he covered the police and City Hall beats for years.

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— Contact Brent Curtis at [brent.curtis@rutlandherald.com](mailto:brent.curtis@rutlandherald.com)

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## Tom Fagan 1932-2008

*Posted by: Scott Edelman • Posted date: October 24, 2008*

As reported by *The Comics Reporter*, Mark Evanier, *The Rutland Herald*, and others, Tom Fagan died on Tuesday (October 21st) at the age of 77. Tom Fagan was a comic-book fan who founded the annual Rutland, Vermont Halloween parade back in 1959, an event which later drew many fans and pros, was featured in both Marvel and

DC comics of the '70s, and even led to an unofficial crossover between the two companies.

I got a chill when I heard the news, because even though I haven't spoken to Tom in at least a decade, he was the first person to make an impression on me at my first comic-book convention. Which means that my acquaintance with him extends back as far as Phil Seuling's July 4th weekend Comic-Con in 1970.

I was only 15 when I found myself sitting next to Tom in the audience at that year's auction. When a pristine copy of *Action Comics* #1 failed to make the minimum bid of \$325, the seller then brought it over, removed it from its frame, and allowed Tom to page through it. He reached out to me in kindness and allowed me to peer at it with him. I was in awe of this artifact, and amazed to see that not all of the stories inside were in full color, something I hadn't known about early Golden Age comics. Not everyone would have been as welcoming to a twerp like me, and I appreciated that fact.

Tom and I always ended up spending time together at Phil's cons, and he mentioned me frequently in the con reports he wrote up in the early '70s. In 1971, I told him I planned to attend the Rutland parade as Cthulhu by covering myself with a drop cloth and hanging squid from it, but at 16, I didn't quite have the stuff to pull it off. In either 1972 or 1973, I said that I would attend the parade dressed as Big Bear from the Jack Kirby comic *Forever People*. Since I hung around with a bunch of other fans whose body types matched the other members of the group, we thought we could make it work, but building the team's Super-Cycle proved too much for us, and that idea ended up being abandoned, too.

By the time I did actually make it to one of Tom's famed parades, Irene and I were already married, she went as the Thor character the Valkyrie, and I'm ashamed to say that all I did was don a store-bought werewolf mask. Sorry about that, Tom! If I was home instead of traveling today, I'd scan in a photo of us just to further humiliate myself as a form of penance.

In any case, I always had a fun time when I was around Tom, and wish that those times had been more frequent. Let that be a yet another lesson (and there have been far too many of them lately) to not let circumstances stand in the way of staying current with friends and acquaintances.

Thanks, Tom, for being one of those who opened the door and let me in so that I could become who I am today.

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# City Bids Farewell to Tom Fagan

*Rutland Herald* | October 30, 2008

By BRENT CURTIS - Herald Staff

On the day Rutland's "Mr. Halloween" was laid to rest, Tom Fagan's friends talked about the far-flung influence that his life and his Halloween Parade have had.

The 77-year-old former Rutland Herald reporter and editor, Tuttle Publishing editor and godfather of the biggest Halloween Parade in the state, if not the nation, was buried at Evergreen Cemetery two days before his favorite holiday.

But his accomplishments locally are rivaled by the prestige he enjoys among comic fans and collectors nationally — including a who's who of renowned comics writers.

Only one person, Joe Latino, a longtime friend of Fagan's, spoke during an afternoon service Wednesday at Clifford Funeral Home.

But Latino had a lot to say, recalling his friend and mentor's deeds and reputation.

"I tracked him down when I was 11 years old because he had written letters to Batman Comics and I was a big fan," Latino said. "And that's when I learned my first lesson about Tom — he was willing to open his world to anyone and he was interested in the world of others."

Fagan's thirst for "knowledge and hopes and dreams" led him on journeys to conventions around the country. Wherever fans of comics, collectibles or James Dean memorabilia gathered, Latino said, Fagan was held in high regard.

After the service was over, Latino said that during a trip with Fagan to Fairmount, Ind., where actor James Dean was raised and is buried, residents in the community knew Fagan by name. Some of the biggest names in the comics industry, including Frank Miller and Stan Lee, also knew Fagan.

Latino said it was through the connections that Fagan made at events elsewhere that he was able to not only put the Rutland Halloween Parade together, but give it a national audience. "He was of Rutland, about Rutland and for Rutland and he brought the world to Rutland," he said. "Few people would be willing to bring

people together without a pecuniary profit, but he did. That's who he was."

What Fagan brought most to Rutland were comics writers who, after seeing his labor of love on Halloween, decided to share his passion with the world.

Rutland, its parade and Fagan himself appeared in more than 20 comics during the 1970s and 1980s. One of those writers was a man who was a comics fan himself when he first met Fagan.

"I met him at a convention. I was a member of ISOS (Illegitimate Sons of Superman) and so was Tom, sort of," longtime comic book writer and editor Len Wein said during a telephone interview on Wednesday.

Wein, who was writing "Justice League of America" during his first trip to Rutland, said he watched the parade alongside two other writers who were penning pages for Marvel Comics and DC Comics at the time.

After seeing the parade — and attending some of Fagan's famous parties at a mansion he oversaw on Grove Street — Wein said, he returned to DC Comics where he wrote the Rutland Parade, Fagan, himself and his two colleagues into the issue of "Justice League of America" No. 103.

"That was a legendary issue because you could see all of us standing along the parade route," Wein said.

The Rutland parade was also noteworthy for crossing comic book boundaries — appearing in an unscripted "crossover" between DC Comics and Marvel Comics that Wein said he was called on the carpet for later by his superiors.

"(Former DC editor Julius Schwartz) said, 'Why didn't you tell me? I would have never let you do that,'" Wein recalled. "I looked at him and said, 'Yeah, that's why I didn't tell you.'"

Looking back on the friend he hasn't seen for more than two decades, Wein said, Rutland owed its unprecedented comic celebrity to Fagan.

"I think his influence was greater than even he knew. The Rutland stories are legendary," he said. "I'm sure he's walking the streets of Gotham as we speak."

— *Contact Brent Curtis at [brent.curtis@rutlandherald.com](mailto:brent.curtis@rutlandherald.com).*

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## Remembering Tom Fagan

November 6, 2008

By KENDALL WILD - The Rutland Herald

**M.** Thomson "Tom" Fagan, who died two weeks ago, was unique for Rutland, but he would have been unique in any community. Combining inquisitiveness and persistence with a vivid imagination, he made an impact on the community that has lasted for years.

The most public expression of those characteristics is the city's widely recognized Halloween parade. It was Tom's idea, and he kept after the city Recreation Director John Cioffredi for weeks — months, really — before the onset of fall, to make sure the event took place and he could ride on a float attired as Batman. His connection with the creators of that comic strip helped add to the notoriety of the parade.

But there were many other examples of his originality. Once when he was still in high school the Paramount Theatre showed a Dracula movie and Tom went into the balcony with a basket filled with a half-dozen live bats, which he released over the audience below. He never got caught, and I heard about the incident only years later.

We were together as city desk reporters here for a number of years in the '50s and '60s, and I got to know Tom and his moods quite well, while never ceasing to be surprised by his originality.

We usually didn't get out of work until after midnight, and one hot summer night Tom said he knew a place at the middle gorge of the Mill River where it was possible to go skinny dipping. There were no houses nearby in those days, and we had to scramble down a steep bank to get to the top of a 30-foot cliff above the river where we could strip. Tom said we could jump from there, but I was afraid a log might be floating below, since we could hear the river flowing but couldn't see the water. But Tom crossed himself and jumped. He called up the all clear, but I chose to scramble down a side path. It took some time, and by the time I reached the water level Tom had been splashing for minutes and said it was time to leave.

In the course of his time on the paper Tom covered murders, fires, fatal car accidents and also all the humdrum items that make up a daily newspaper. But he was a worrier. When he got an idea for something special, he would worry aloud about it until he could bring it to fruition, either in action like the parade or by writing about it and seeing it in print. For instance, Tom somehow became acquainted with the derelicts who lived in the

bushes by the railroad tracks in a couple of spots near the city. He got to know some of them by name. There came a time when he wanted to write about them, and he wanted a picture to go with the story. None of his subjects wanted to be photographed, so Tom had me take a shot of his own arm on the ground, sticking out of a bush and holding an empty liquor bottle. Then he wrote a story that went along with the photo.

When Fidel Castro came to prominence Tom couldn't remember the name, and referred to "Felix Calypso." Sitting in the Kong Chow Restaurant, he persuaded a group of Mount St. Joseph students to dress up in army fatigue outfits and interrupt a high school meeting one night at City Hall, saying: "Here are Felix Calypso's demands."

Another time he somehow found out how to fix a wired clothespin so it would snap against the head of a wooden match and eject it when it was ablaze. He got Aldo Merusi to take a picture of the device to run with the story he insisted needed to be written. It may have been just coincidence, but the day the story appeared there seemed to be a number of grass fires in the area. I went around with Merusi to some of the sites, and found one place where a prominent lawyer was raking ashes in a field near his home.

"Field burned?" Merusi asked, and the lawyer replied: "Yes, thanks to that textbook on arson you printed this morning."

The actor James Dean and Elvis Presley were two that Tom greatly admired, and for years he sported a ducktail haircut in response. He even paid a visit to Dean's burial spot in Indiana. He often came to work wearing a sweater in which the outline of a bat had been knitted, and he was usually attired in black outfits. While he never told his real first name, he dropped hints that the "M" stood for Mitchell, and he enjoyed coming to work in dark clothing and being called "Black Mitch." Another name we had for him was, naturally, "Tomcat."

He introduced me to John Pixley Clement, who was another unique character in the community. Once when we were working late, a man had a quarrel with a relative in the press room and returned at about deadline time with a shotgun. We called the police, who subdued him without a shot being fired, and we ran a story and picture about the incident.

Tom was acquainted with the man, and sometime later the fellow approached him aggressively, asking: "Who was responsible for that story about me?" To which Tom replied: "You were. Because you did it."

Tom had a hang-up about age. I think it was the James Dean influence that made him admire youthfulness. Once a bunch of us had to go to Manchester for an event and stopped at a restaurant for lunch. We ordered beer and the waitress said: "I assume you are all over 21." Tom said: "No, I'm 18," and the waitress wouldn't serve him, though at that particular time he was actually closer to 30 than to 20. But he wouldn't admit it.

I drove a Jeep in those days, and in the wee hours after work we'd explore back roads in the countryside. When the headlights showed a porcupine, Tom would yell for a stop, jump out with a tire iron, and pursue the animal on foot. Once another passenger remarked that such an act seemed unusually violent, and Tom said: "You'd feel different if some of them invaded your village and carried off your wife and children before your very eyes."

Yes, Tom Fagan was vividly imaginative, intelligent, persistent, creative — and unique.

— Kendall Wild is a retired editor of the Herald.



**Super-Hero  
parade  
participants,  
1970**

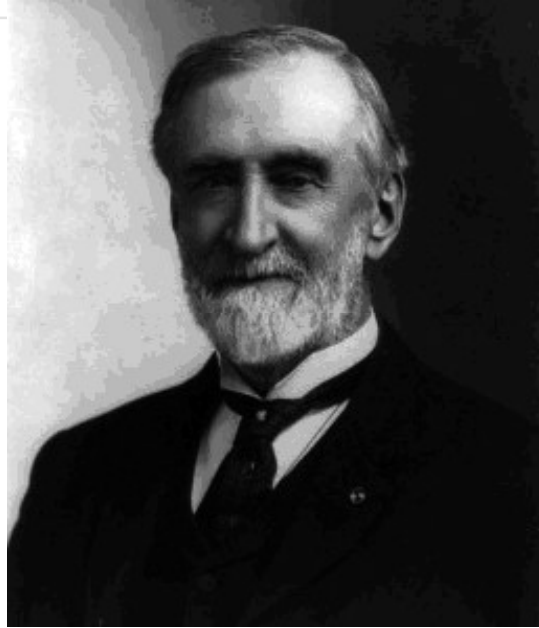


Photo: Antique Mansion

# The “Fagan” Mansion (Clement House)

# Clement House's Vermont History

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Redfield Proctor

The Clement House/Antique Mansion has a rich history. The home was built in 1867 by Redfield Proctor. Redfield Proctor was raised near Cavendish, VT, in Proctorsville, which was named for his grandfather. Redfield's widowed mother, Betsy Parker Proctor, raised him alone from the time he was 8 years old after his father died suddenly. He later married Emily Jane Dutton from Cavendish and they had five children together: Arabella, Fletcher, Fanny, Redfield, Jr., and Emily. Redfield had been practicing law in Boston but returned to Vermont to become part of her Union forces, the house was built by him after the Civil War and owned by him until he died in 1908. Proctor established the Vermont Marble Company and developed the town which would later be named for him (Proctor, VT) which housed not only the marble factory but many of the workers, often recent immigrants, who served as laborers.

He became Governor of Vermont in 1878 and his two sons Fletcher and Redfield both became governors of Vermont in the next couple generations. He himself was Secretary of War from 1889-1891, and died in office as US Senator from Vermont in 1908. An article on City-Data.com says "Colonel Redfield Proctor is credited with transforming the marble business into one of the country's greatest industries, bringing prosperity to Rutland and power to Proctor. In 1886 Proctor succeeded in convincing the state legislature that two new townships should be created from the original town. The new townships of Proctor and West Rutland, largely owned or controlled by the Proctor family, contained some of the richest marble deposits in the world; thus did Rutland lose its title as Marble City". His wife substantially funded the marble bridge in Proctor with a dedication to their son Fletcher who predeceased her.

The house was next purchased by Henry Clement who was a nephew of Proctor's longtime political rival. The Clement family owned the *Rutland Herald* (longest continuously operating family-owned newspaper in the country) and Clement's son, John, returned, after some extended travels subsequent to his service in WWI, with stories, paintings and writings. He wrote for the *Rutland Herald* in his later years and was known to have had many large late night gatherings at the house which stayed in his family for over 60 years.

In the early 1970s, the house was occupied by Tom Fagan, who organized and promoted the Rutland Halloween Parade starting in 1960. Fagan typically held a colorful post-parade Halloween party for his friends, including acquaintances who freelanced as comic book writers. Because in the early days of comic book writing authors were allowed to freelance and write for multiple companies, there are episodes in several different series which revolve around the Halloween parade and events on All Hallows Eve at "Fagan's Mansion". From 1975 on, the house was owned by a succession of prominent local families: the St. Peters, who sold off significant acreage which became Country Grove condominiums, the Foleys who sought in vain to have the Dining Room murals restored and who renovated the north end of the home, and the Duncans who did much of the existing decorating. It was approved as a Bed and Breakfast by the City Development Board in June, 2010.

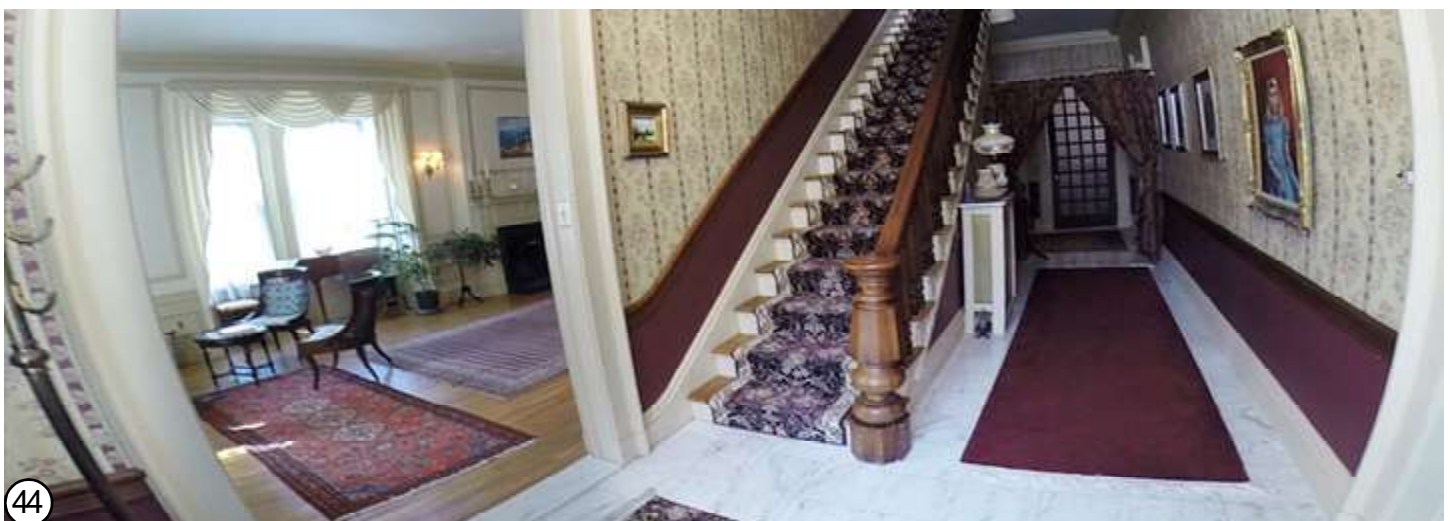


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Photos:  
Antique Mansion





Photos: Kirk Hastings





Photo:  
Rutland Herald

Sallie  
Gill

## Antique Mansion: Come for the history, stay for the comfort

*Rutland Herald* | February 16, 2015

The Antique Mansion located in the City of Rutland opposite the Rutland Country Club, on Grove Street, was built in 1867 by Redfield Proctor and owned at one point by the Clement family who also owned the Rutland Herald. It was even featured in some comic books in the 1970s along with the Rutland Halloween Parade. Run by husband and wife Sallie Gill and “Chef and Giver of Information” Larry Jensen, the Antique Mansion is now a bed and breakfast. Here Gill discusses their business:

### **What is nature of your business?**

The Antique Mansion is a bed and breakfast. Most of our guests stay one to three nights, although some stay longer. Some just come for a quiet vacation and time to rest.

### **How/why did the company begin? What was the inspiration, the story behind its beginning?**

The house itself gave me the idea to create a B&B, as it has large, comfortable rooms with high ceilings and ample bathrooms. Its special place in the history of Rutland widens the number of travelers who might be attracted to stay here. I had a good experience running my own business, a franchise called The Little Gym, in Connecticut and wanted to have my own business again. The hospitality aspect common to both businesses was appealing to me.

### **How did you get to where you are today with the business (if it has changed focus, grown, downsized, etc.)?**

The expectation was that B&B guests would be couples. While we do get plenty of couples, we also happily get families visiting relatives for holidays or family events, heading for camp or family vacation, and groups such as golf buddies or ski team members. We also sometimes get individuals who are traveling for company business, personal business, looking to relocate to the region, or visiting someone in a hospital or nursing home.

### How is your business unique?

One unique aspect of the Antique Mansion is that we have some flexibility in combining rooms for a family or group of friends. Also unusual for a bed and breakfast is that we do accept single-night bookings (but please not on holiday weekends!) It is tough to say whether the architecture of the mansion is the most interesting aspect to our visitors or whether the history of the house and its inhabitants is even more compelling. Redfield Proctor, a Civil War officer, state representative, governor of Vermont, secretary of war under President Harrison and a U.S. senator, built the house and lived here with his young family early in his career. A member of the Clement family, Henry Clement, bought the house after Proctor died; he and his wife lived here until they died in the mid-1950s and their son John Clement, known as a Vermont historian and employed at the Rutland Herald at the time of his death, was here until 1968. Tom Fagan, who promoted and popularized the Rutland Halloween Parade, lived here for four years and invited graphic novel writer-friends to parties here, which is why descriptions of the house and various superhero escapades there on Halloween are found in Marvel Comics and DC Comics.

### Why Rutland?

I don't know how many B&Bs have the fortuitous combination of such a convenient location without being close to a busy road, and also an idyllic park-like setting. Proximity to Amtrak transportation, downtown dining and entertainment, and country club activity are key for various guests.

### As a business owner, what is most important lesson you've learned?

Flexibility. Not everyone wants the same thing from a visit to a B&B. Some of our guests have dietary needs which we try to accommodate as often as possible. I am amazed at the number of guests who have told me they've never stayed in a B&B before. We are really striving to give each guest a memorable positive experience. Another lesson was in the number of people who find us on the Internet. We have received high marks on TripAdvisor and many seem to use that to pick a place to stay when traveling.

### Contact information

Antique Mansion B&B, 85 Field Avenue Rutland, VT 05701  
802-855-8372 - [antiquemansionbb.com](mailto:info@antiquemansionbb.com); [info@antiquemansionbb.com](mailto:info@antiquemansionbb.com)

*Joanna Tebbs Young is a writer and writing workshop facilitator living in Rutland. Contact her at [joanna@wisdomwithinink.com](mailto:joanna@wisdomwithinink.com), [wisdomwithinink.com](http://wisdomwithinink.com), [facebook.com/TheWritersRoomatAllenHouse](https://www.facebook.com/TheWritersRoomatAllenHouse) or on Twitter at [@jtebbbsyoung](https://twitter.com/jtebbbsyoung).*

Photo: Rutland Herald



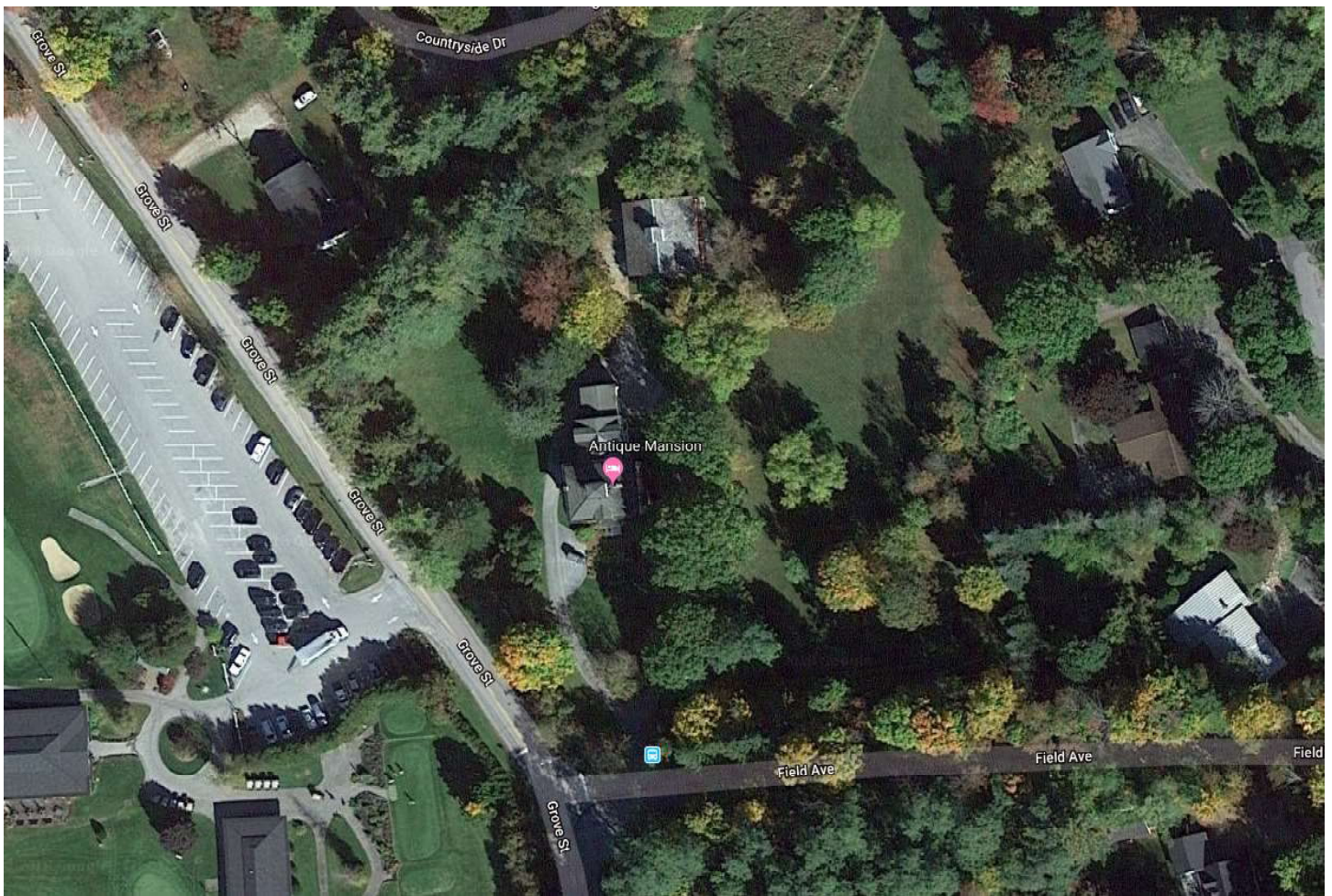
(Sallie Gill and her husband, Larry Jensen)



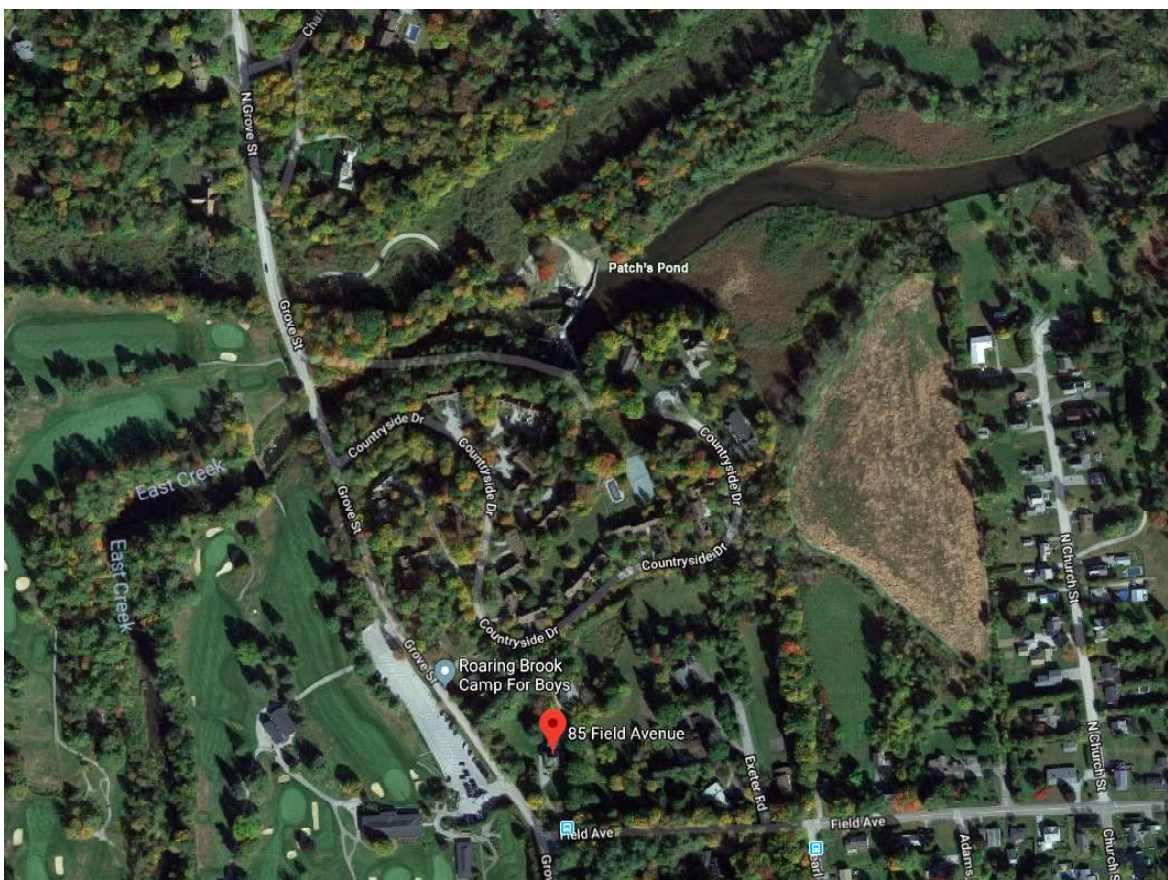
Photos: Antique Mansion



**The Antique Mansion**



(above) Aerial shot of The Antique Mansion, at Field Avenue and Grove Street



(left) Aerial shot of Patch's Pond, north of the Antique Mansion



(above) Patch's Pond, featured in the comic book story "Night of the Reaper", in BATMAN #237, December, 1971



Photos: Antique Mansion



Photo: Kirk Hastings



**(above) Andy Yanchus, DC Comics Colorist, as "Man-Bat" on the upper balcony of the Clement Mansion**

Photos: Alan Bradford

**(below) Andy Yanchus as "Man-Bat," in 1970**





***(left)* Comic book writer Len Wein as “Morbis” (1970)**

Photos:  
Alan Bradford

***(right)* Al Bradford as “Thor”, and Sue O’Neil as “Sif” (1970)**





Photo: Alan Bradford

**(left) Sue O'Neil and (right) Cara Sherman Terino -- both as "Barda", 1973!**



Photo: Mark Griffin

**(left) Sallie Gill, owner of the Antique Mansion**



*(left)* Tom Fagan as “Batman” and Sue O’Neil as “Hela”, 1971

*(below)* Tom Fagan as “Nighthawk”, 1970

Photos: Alan Bradford

*(below)* Tom Watkins as “Solomon Grundy”, and Marv Wolfman as “Aquaman”, 1970

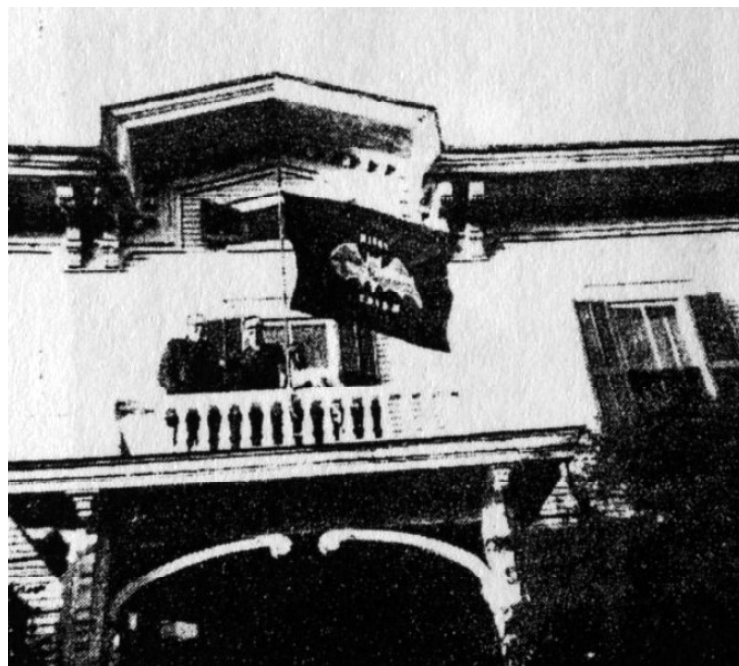




**Sue O'Neil  
as "Hela, the  
Goddess of  
Death", 1971**



**(above) Wendy and Richard Pini  
as “Crystal” and “The Vision”, 1973**



**(above) Tom Fagan and Rich Rubenfeld  
with Tom’s “Night Legion” flag flying  
over the mansion**

Photos: Alan Bradford



**(right) Tom  
Watkins  
as “Solomon  
Grundy”, and  
Andy Yanchus  
as “Man-Bat”,  
1970**



(above and right) Photos: Antique Mansion

## The Antique Mansion 85 Field Avenue, Rutland, Vermont



(below) Photo: Kirk Hastings





## The Antique Mansion

Photos: Antique Mansion



Photo Composite by Kirk Hastings

**Batman visits the old Clement House!**

**KIRK**



Photo: Kirk Hastings

# The Rutland Halloween Parade Museum

## Halloween Parade Museum Opens in Courcelle Building



Photo: The Mountain Times

*See the full exhibit, many items courtesy of Royal Barnard, former owner of the Mountain Times, in an ongoing exhibit at Rutland Rec's Courcelle Building.*

Friday, Aug. 18, 6 p.m. RUTLAND—The Rutland Recreation and Parks Department is celebrating the history of the city Halloween Parade and its ties to the world of comic books with the opening of the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum. This will consist of a permanent exhibit in the Courcelle Building featuring large painted panels that were displayed on floats in the 1960s through the 1980s, historic photos, and several comic books featuring the parade.

The main focus of the exhibit is how the parade became a destination and hub of activity in the comic community in the 60s and 70s. Most of the stories featuring Rutland and the Halloween Parade were written by artists that attended the parade, such as Steve Englehart, George Conway, Roy Thomas, and more. The Halloween Parade was the setting for the first unofficial crossover between Marvel and DC in 1972, 45 years ago.

Nathan Allen wrote an article in the *Mountain Times*, in 2012, that read in part: "Tom Fagan is considered the founder of the Rutland Halloween Parade, which began in 1960. A writer for the *Rutland Herald*, he was a well-known comic book fan who counted many famous comic artists and writers of the day as his friends. He wrote letters and encouraged his friends in the business to support his efforts promoting what would become the largest and longest running Halloween parade. Not surprisingly, the event had a strong superhero theme as Fagan and his comic book friends were often present and in costume. And it worked in reverse, too. Soon the city of Rutland and the parade became popular location in comic books. *Batman* #237, *Justice League of America* #103, *Amazing Adventures* #16 and *Thor* #207, are just four of over 13 issues that mention Rutland specifically."

The opening will occur on Aug. 18 from 6-8 p.m. in the Courcelle Building at 16 North Street Extension in Rutland. Light refreshments will be provided.

# Art Imitates Rutland: Comics Past Honored

*Rutland Herald* | August 17, 2017

By PATRICK MCARDLE - Staff Writer - [patrick.mcardle@rutlandherald.com](mailto:patrick.mcardle@rutlandherald.com)



*Molly Wight, an intern at the Rutland Recreation and Parks Department, holds up a photo of people dressed as superheroes for the Rutland Halloween Parade. ROBERT LAYMAN / STAFF PHOTO*

In the mid 1960s and early 1970s, the Rutland Halloween Parade met pop art: Real people dressed as fictional superheroes, while comic books featured fictional superheroes in the real parade.

On Friday, a small museum dedicated to the parade, the comic books and the superheroes common to both will open Friday at the Rutland Recreation and Parks Department's Courcelle Building on North Street Extension.

The exhibition is curated by Molly Wight, an intern whose mother, Cindi Wight, is the superintendent of the Rec Department. Pieces include large paintings of Superman, Wonder Woman, Spider-Man and the Marvel Comics version of Thor.

Wight said the goal of gathering the artwork was to give Rutlanders another reason to be proud of their history and the parade, one of the city's most popular events.

"Cindi found out it was featured in a bunch of comic books back in the '60s and '70s, in the Silver Age of comic books," she said.

Stories in Marvel's "The Avengers" and "The Defenders" were set during the Rutland Halloween parade and a three-part story — which included a series that starred The Beast from "The X-Men," DC Comics' "Justice League of America" and Marvel's "Thor" — is considered the first crossover between the rival comic book companies.

A 1971 issue of "Batman" also used the Rutland parade as a setting.

Much of the credit for Rutland's appearance in comic books has been given to Tom Fagan, a former reporter for the Rutland Herald. Fagan, who died in 2008, hosted a number of Halloween parties and invited many professional comic book creators to attend.

Wight said some Rutland residents donated copies of a number of those comics which will be on display Friday, but the bigger draw is likely to be the 8-foot-tall wooden panels that were used as background for parade floats.

According to Wight, those panels were found while cleaning out the attic at another Rutland recreation building, the Giorgetti Building on Oak Street Extension.

The permanent exhibit will consist of hanging the panels on the wall of a classroom at the Courcelle building and a hallway. Putting the panels there will allow regular programming to continue at the Courcelle while visitors can still see the historic panels.

Mark Horwedel, of Rutland, plans to attend the opening Friday. He was a friend of Fagan since 1970 and, starting when he was a high school student, was one of the artists who created the panels.

Horwedel was an amateur artist with a love for comic books who, because he was young enough not to be working yet, had the time and energy to create art for the parade.

"Because of all the painting and drawing I did, when Halloween came around, I was like first up to bat," he said. "I helped them quite a bit. I could work right until dawn on a lot of this stuff and being new to it, I didn't mind it at all. It was a lot of fun."

Among the artists that Horwedel met was Frank Miller, a Vermonter who went on to become one of the most famous comic book writers and artists, with work that included the Batman miniseries, "The Dark Knight Returns."

Horwedel recently retired from Carris Reels and said he never pursued art professionally. As much as he enjoyed it as a hobby, he said he didn't care for the business side of selling one's art.

However, he recalled one of his pieces that depicted Fagan hung on the back of one of the floats in the 2008 Halloween Parade. Fagan died a few weeks before that year's parade and Horwedel said the irony was that Fagan never won a trophy for one of his floats, but the float with the artwork of Fagan did earn a prize.

"I'm sure wherever Tom is, he snickered over that one," he said.

Horwedel said he expected Fagan would be proud of the museum. But he added that he wasn't surprised.

"There was a lot going on," he said. "We had two or three comics in the month of October coming out with Rutland as the base. It was amazing at the time and I thought, 'Goodness, we're going to put ourselves on the map with this thing.'"

On Wednesday, Wight was still finishing the exhibit. She said signs would be up soon to would help visitors learn about the history of Rutland's Halloween Parade being depicted in comic books.

She said she hoped people would come to the opening Friday, which will be from 6-8 p.m.

"It will be interesting because they'll learn about how the Rutland Halloween Parade has such an iconic, well-known history in the comic books," she said.



Photo: Kirk Hastings

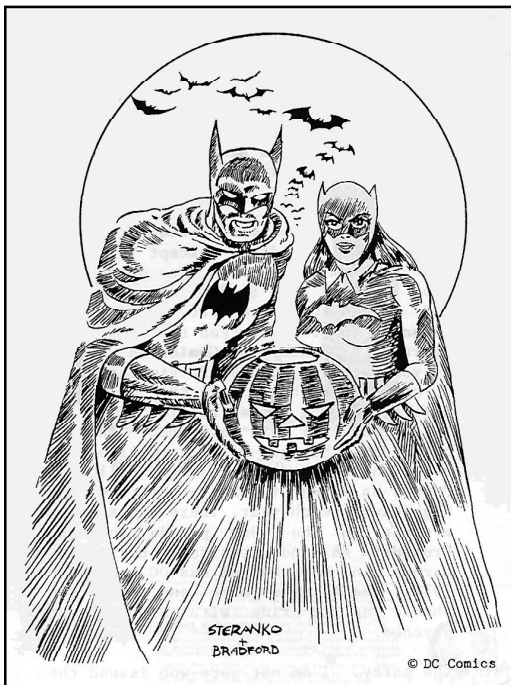


(left) Float backdrop painted as a memorial to Tom Fagan, after his passing in 2008

(below)  
Photo: Kirk Hastings



**Museum hallway  
showing past  
parade float backdrops**

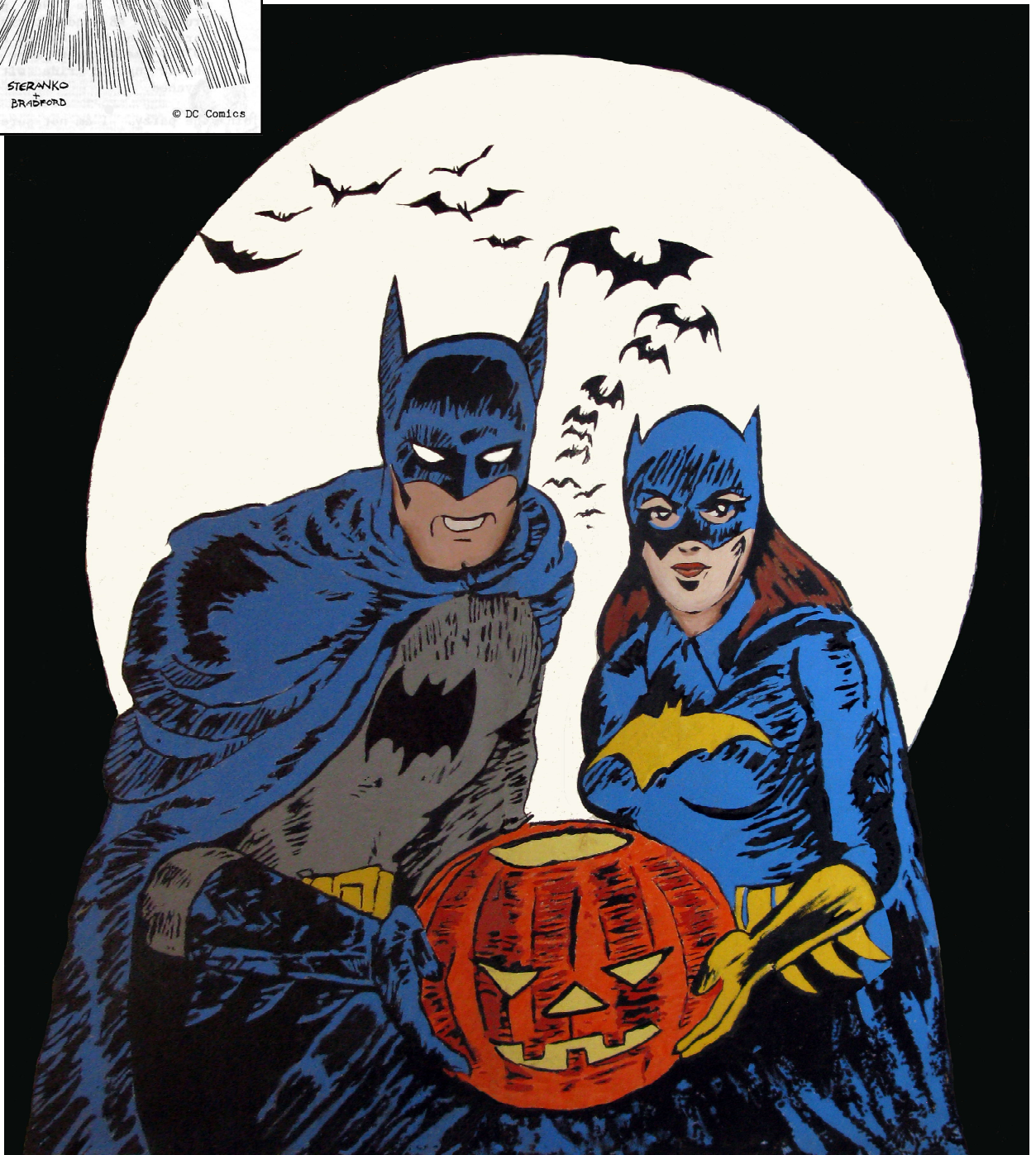


*(Batman and Batgirl)*

Original panel from past  
Halloween Parade Float,  
on display at the Rutland  
Halloween Parade Museum  
*(below)*

*(above)*  
Original Jim  
Steranko  
drawing  
inked by Al  
Bradford,  
used as the  
model for  
painted float  
backdrop  
*(right)*

Touched-up photo by Kirk Hastings



*(Sandy the dog, and Batman)*



Touched-up photo by Kirk Hastings

Original panel from past Halloween Parade Float,  
on display at the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum

Touched-up photo by Kirk Hastings



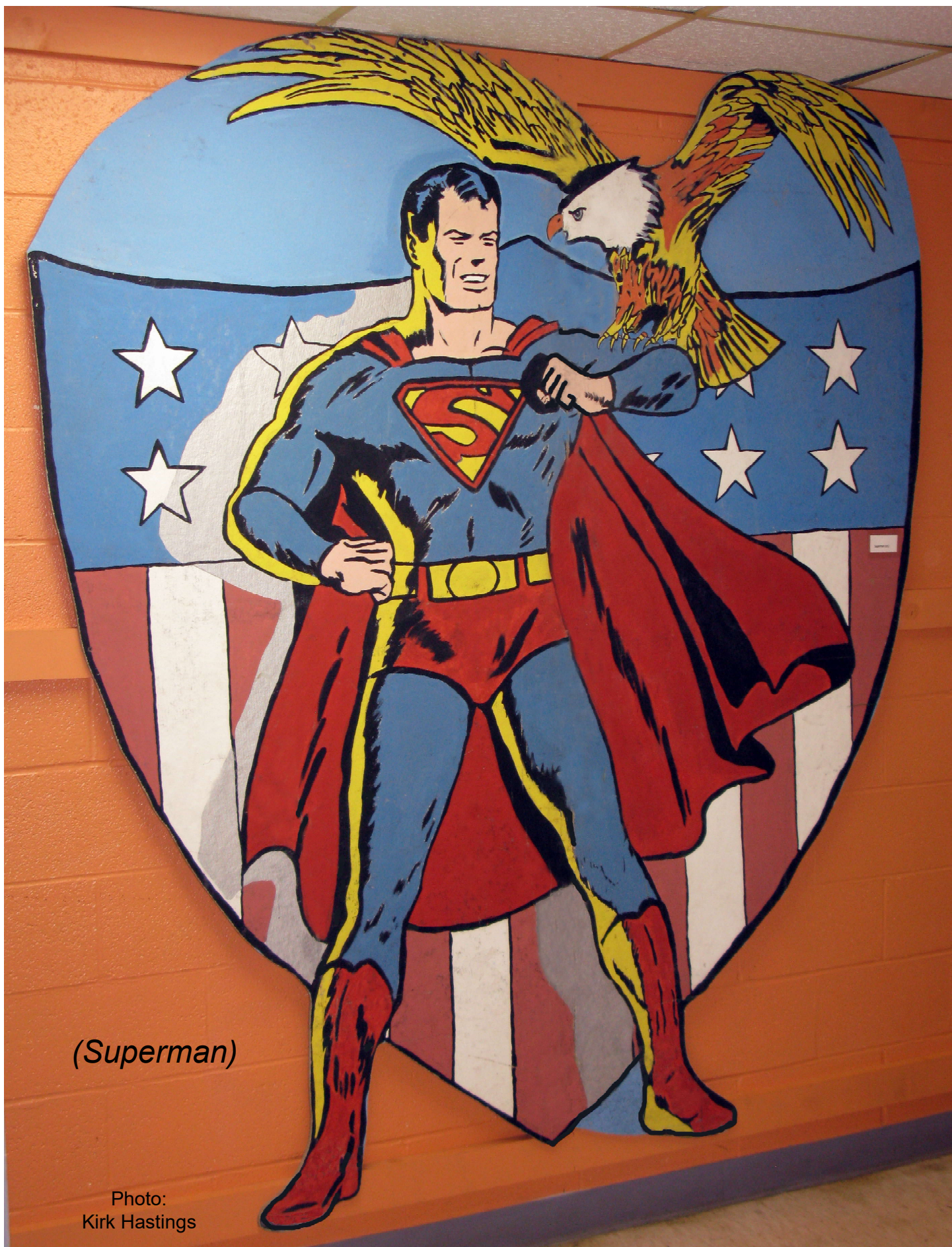
Original panel from past Halloween Parade Float,  
on display at the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum

*(Captain Midnight and Jack of Hearts)*



Touched-up photo by Kirk Hastings

Original panel from past Halloween Parade Float,  
on display at the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum



(Superman)

Photo:  
Kirk Hastings

Original panel from past Halloween Parade Float, on display at the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum

Touched-up photo by Kirk Hastings



Original panel from past Halloween Parade Float,  
on display at the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum

Touched-up photo by Kirk Hastings



Original panel from past Halloween Parade Float,  
on display at the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum

Touched-up photo by Kirk Hastings



Original panel from past Halloween Parade Float,  
on display at the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum

Original panel from past Halloween Parade Float,  
on display at the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum



(Wonder  
Woman)

Photo: Kirk Hastings



Photo: DC Comics

# The Rutland Comic Books

# Annual Rutland, Vt. Halloween Parade Makes Comic Book History

Sun Community News  
OCTOBER 21, 2010

This year's Rutland Halloween Parade, scheduled for Oct. 30, 6:30 p.m., owes its international popularity to a few very superhuman superheroes.

In the early 1970s, the popular Rutland Halloween Parade was used as the setting of a number of superhero comic books, including *Batman* (issue 237), *Justice League of America* (issue 103), *Freedom Fighters* (issue 6), *Amazing Adventures* (issue 16), *Avengers* (issue 83), and *The Mighty Thor* (issue 207).

The Rutland Halloween Parade remains an annual event held on Halloween since it started in 1960. Tom Fagan, a local writer and comic book fan, is credited with having a hand in the parade's early development and superhero theme.

According to an Oct. 22, 2006, article by *Boston Globe* writer Peggy Shinn, "He was friends with many comic book authors and artists, most of whom hailed from New York. Fagan persuaded some of them to take part in the Rutland Halloween Parade in comic book character costumes.

In 1965, a local newspaper reported that the Joker, Plastic Man, and Dr. Strange were roaming the streets of Rutland, along with Batman (presumably Fagan, but like Bruce Wayne, the Caped Crusader wouldn't divulge his identity). More comic book heroes appeared (at the parade) every year..."

Comic book creators known to have attended the parade in the past include Steve Englehart, Gerry Conway, Marv Wolfman, Bernie Wrightson, Dennis O'Neil, Roy Thomas, Alan Weiss, and Len Wein.

Though Fagan is no longer directly involved in the planning of the parade, the popular event continues to this day, celebrating its 48th anniversary in 2007. Fagan attended the 2006 parade, sitting with the judges along with his personal assistant.

DC Comics has featured the Rutland Halloween Parade as a setting for superhero adventures since the 1970s.



(left) From **THE AVENGERS #83**, December, 1970 (Marvel)

Photo: Marvel Comics

AVENGERS  
15¢ 83  
DEC



MARVEL  
COMICS  
GROUP

# THE AVENGERS

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY

GUEST-STARRING:  
BLACK WIDOW  
AND THE MAGNIFICENT  
**MEDUSA!**

ALL RIGHT, GIRLS--  
THAT FINISHES OFF THESE  
**MALE CHAUVINIST  
PIGS!**

FROM NOW ON,  
IT'S THE  
**VALKYRIE  
AND HER LADY  
LIBERATORS!**

THE AVENGERS #83, December, 1970

THE VERY FIRST COMIC BOOK TO FEATURE RUTLAND, VT



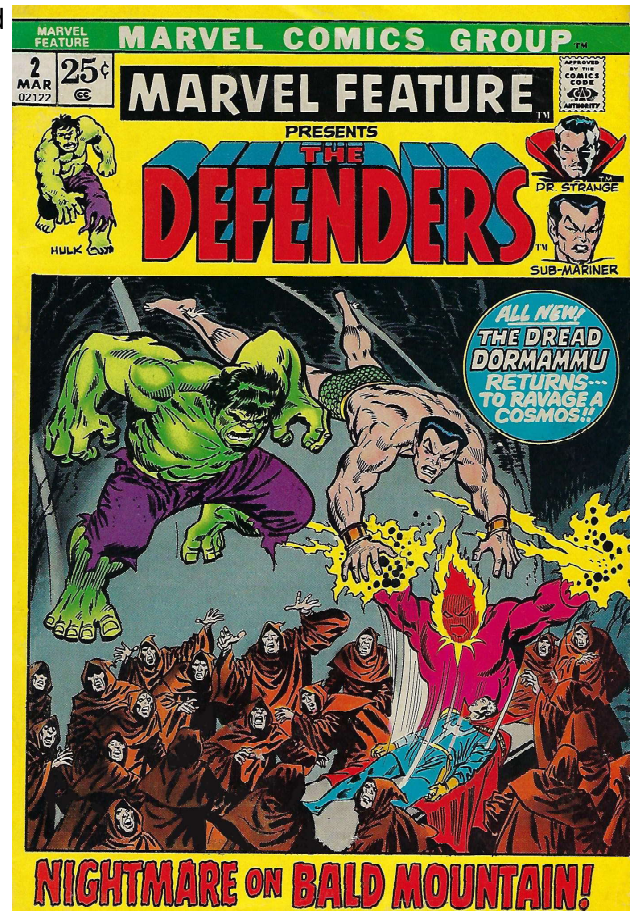
BATMAN #237, December, 1971



76 THOR #206, December, 1972

Photos: DC and Marvel Comics

# RUTLAND, VT COMIC BOOKS



MARVEL FEATURE #2, March, 1972



JLA #103, December, 1972



AMAZING ADVENTURES #16, Jan., 1973



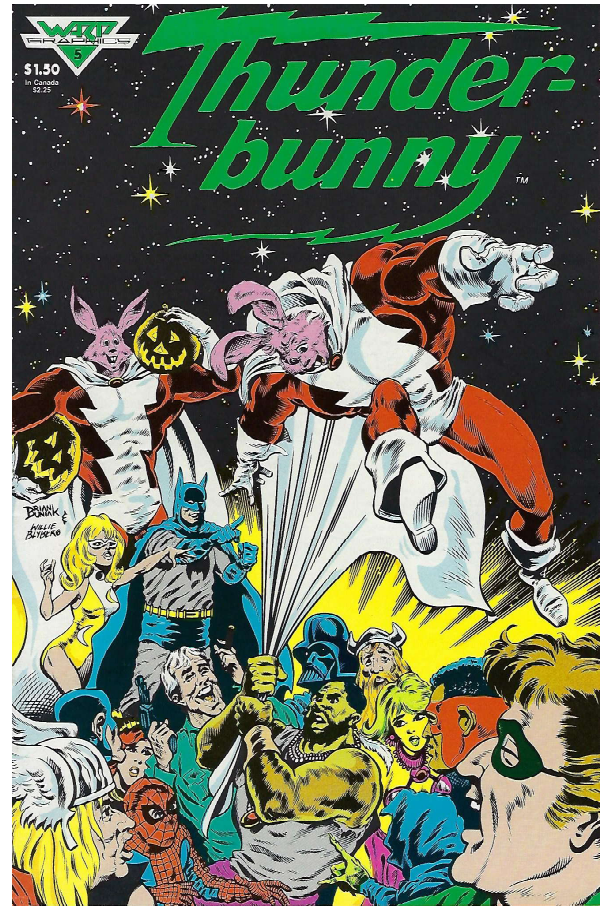
DC SUPER-STARS #18, Jan., 1978

Photos: DC and  
Marvel Comics;  
WaRP Graphics

# RUTLAND, VT COMIC BOOKS



THOR #207, January, 1973



THUNDER BUNNY #5, Feb., 1986

TO SOME, THIRTEEN IS AN UNLUCKY NUMBER, BODING MISFORTUNE AND EVIL DESIGNS...

TO OTHERS, IT IS A CHARM, A SYMBOL TO BE CONJURED WITH...

PERHAPS IT IS NEITHER...  
PERHAPS IT IS BOTH!  
ON THIS BRIGHT NIGHT, IT  
MATTERS LITTLE, INDEED...

# RUTLAND'S THIRTEENTH ANNUAL HALLOWEEN PARADE

FOR THIS IS THE NIGHT OF  
RUTLAND'S THIRTEENTH ANNUAL  
HALLOWEEN PARADE... AND ON  
ITS BUSTLING, CROWD-COVERED  
STREETS, THAT NUMBER STANDS  
FOR **EXCITEMENT!**

(From JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #103, December, 1972)

# Once Upon a Halloween...

WHEN COMIC PROS BEAT A PATH TO RUTLAND, VERMONT

by Carl (the Gaff) Gafford

Comics often have holiday themes and/or deal with actual events, so it should hardly come as a surprise that, from 1970 to 1973, the real-life annual Halloween Parade in Rutland, Vermont, discussed in the preceding interview with Tom Fagan, made appearances in both Marvel and DC comics. Seven of them, altogether. And those stories spotlight a high concentration of comics pros in everything from cameos to featured roles!



Avengers #83.

Writer Roy Thomas got the ball rolling in *Avengers* #83 (Dec. 1970), at the height of the "Relevance Craze" in comics, in his story "Come On In... the Revolution's Fine!" drawn by John Buscema and Tom Palmer.

Four Avengers—in Rutland to bodyguard a local scientist—drop by the Halloween party hosted by parade chairman Tom Fagan, who greets them garbed as Nighthawk. (In real life, Fagan at that time presided over parades as Batman; but in a Marvel comic Roy opted to utilize the Batman equivalent he'd designed for the Squadron Supreme.) Tom promptly introduces the Avengers to out-

of-towners Roy and Jean Thomas. Roy was generous enough to give his then-wife the punchline [see illo].

The Rutland parade is soon attacked (for the first but far from the last time) by the Masters of Evil—then by the Liberators, several female Avengers led astray by a new villainess, the Valkyrie—who turns out to be the Enchantress. Both groups are after the scientist's Parallel-Time Projector. Naturally, in the end, they don't get it.

Rutland made its next appearance in 1971, in the second *Defenders* story (*Marvel Feature* #2, March 1972; "Nightmare on Bald Mountain"); this time Roy was abetted by artists Ross Andru and Sal Buscema. Since Rutland lies in the shadow of a very real Bald Mountain, Tom relates its mysterious past to an awed Roy and Jean Thomas.

Ere long, as the 12th annual Rutland Halloween Parade goes on, Dr. Strange, the Hulk, and Sub-Mariner are battling Dormammu and his hooded cultists to a standstill that closes the rift between the dimensions (and practically blows off the top of Bald Mountain).

This year, however, it wasn't only Marvel



Tom Fagan, Roy & Jeanie Thomas make their four-color debut. From *Avengers* #83.

heroes who dropped in unexpectedly on the Rutland festivities. So did DC's Caped Crusader, in "Night of the Reaper" (*Batman* #237, Dec. 1971) by writer Denny O'Neil and artists Neal Adams and Dick Giordano.

Dick (then Robin) Grayson makes the Halloween scene with buddies Gerry Conway, Bernie Wrightson, and Alan Weiss (all of whom were writing or drawing for DC at the time). Artist Adams drew revelers on the parade floats in actual DC and Marvel costumes, including his own recently-designed Havok.

Batman comes to Rutland looking for escaped Nazi Colonel Kurt "The Butcher" Schloss, a notorious World War Two concentration camp commandant, having been tipped off by a physician named Dr. Gruener, a survivor of Schloss' camp. For the first time, the "real" Batman meets party host Tom Fagan (in *Batman* garb here, this being a DC comic). Also present are Denny O'Neil, and Len Wein and Mark Hanerfeld (as *House of Mystery/Secret* hosts Cain and Abel). Most if not all DC personnel in this story had come to Vermont in '71; since these issues came out circa Halloween, each Rutland tale tended to reflect the previous year's festivities.

Eventually, the Nazis are captured and the deadly Reaper is unmasked—Dr. Gruener, seeking



Marvel Feature #2.

Written by Denny O'Neil, Batman #237 was based on an idea by Bernie Wrightson (with an assist by Harlan Ellison) and features spectacular Neal Adams art. (By the way, that big thunderbolt-impaled-in-a-base on the float in the background is an oversize copy of the Shazam award given out in the early '70s by ACBA, the pros' own short-lived Academy of Comic Book Arts!)

personal vengeance on Schloss. The Reaper is about to slice and dice a fallen Alan Weiss, when he spies an artifact of Alan's caught in his scythe: A Star of David. Gruener realizes he's become the very evil he sought to destroy, and stumbles dazed off a very real dam to his death.

Halloween 1972 had no less than three Rutland appearances weaving through the two major companies: Beginning in *Amazing Adventures* #16 (with The Beast), jumping cross-company into *Justice League of America* #103, then concluding in *Thor* #207. (One could read the DC middle chapter separate from the two Marvels, but they actually made up one complete story.)

AA #16's, "And the Juggernaut Will Get You... If You Don't Watch Out!" from writer Steve Englehart and artists Bob Brown and Frank McLaughlin, opens with a beat-up old Mustang bearing owner Englehart, Len and (first wife) Glynis Wein, and Gerry



Amazing Adventures #16.

Conway to Rutland. As Hank McCoy, the Beast and his friend Vera bum a ride—while in the background the Juggernaut reappears in this dimension.

The young people head for Fagan's mansion, where Glynis dons a "Powergirl" costume (the Marvel equivalent of a Supergirl outfit; DC's Power Girl wasn't created till the mid-'70s). The Juggernaut crashes the party. (The previous year's battle between Dr. Strange and Dormammu had weakened the dimension walls enough for Juggy to return to Earth.) When the Beast manages to yank off his power-bestowing helmet, the weakened Mr. J. tries to steal

Steve's car (he won't be the only one tonight), but it won't start. Catching up, the Beast sees that, because time moved differently in the dimension where Juggy has been, he has turned into an old man.

The story ends with the Beast alone in the cold, dark night—which is also where his series ends, as this was the Beast's finale in *Amazing Adventures*.



Batman #237.

refers to the Phantom Stranger (who opens the story), and not Tom Fagan (who by now is no stranger). The Stranger alerts six JLAers that their old foe Felix Faust plans to open a dimensional gate at Rutland to bring forth dark demons. (Doesn't he know that trick never works?) Meanwhile, Steve Englehart and Gerry Conway pick up the muffler from Steve's old Mustang, while Len and Glynis Wein watch. Glynis soon goes missing. (This story occurs between *Amazing Adventures* #16 and *Thor* #207.)

The JLAers decide to use the Clement house as a local base of operations. Batman introduces his super-friends to Tom, and before you can say "Grand Marshal," our heroes are leading Rutland's 13th annual Halloween Parade! Felix Faust causes the floats to vanish, puts the crowd in a trance, and is about to cast a spell to kill the comatose JLAers, when they're saved by the Phantom Stranger.

Trying to flee, Faust steals Steve's car. Not far down the road the police pull him over. Faust surrenders and confesses, thinking his infamy has identified him—but the cops had only pulled him over to give him a ticket for the faulty muffler on Steve's crate!

*Thor* #207's "Firesword" by writer Gerry Conway and artists John Buscema and Vince Colletta is perhaps the weakest Rutland story, coming as it does in the middle of an ongoing *Thor* story arc.

After the parade, our friends Steve, Gerry, Len, and Glynis pile into Steve's bucket of bolts and head for Tom Fagan's house, where their genial host (garbed as Nighthawk again) seems glassy-eyed and vague. A shadowy figure in the house has Tom under his spell!

Back in the Vermont woods, Thor has landed with the saintly Sif and the hefty Hildagarde in pursuit of Crusher Creel, the Absorbing Man. What's more, Loki soon pops up, having harnessed



Justice League of America #103.

The "Rutland stories," however, had nearly run their course, for reasons no one can say with certainty. Steve Englehart did a lone sortie the next year (*Avengers* #119, Jan. 1974), which found Tom Fagan again greeting visiting heroes in his Nighthawk costume. Only, it wasn't really Tom at all, but the Collector, back for another try at adding the Avengers to his mantlepiece. No comics pros appeared in this tale, however. At story's end, Loki, reduced to the mental state of a child, was left in Rutland, to be looked over by Tom and his fellow Vermonters.

And that was the end of the Rutland stories from Marvel and/or DC—though there was one latter-day Rutland tale by Martin Greim in his alternative comic



Thor #207.

Thunder Bunny. Whether it was changing comics administrations or simply that the novelty had worn off, after 1973 the two major companies said goodbye to visits to the rustic Vermont woods on All Hallows' Eve. It's been said that in the mid-'70s Marv Wolfman (or somebody) decided to throw a party in New York on Halloween, and maybe that helped bring an end to the pros' northward annual treks.

But they were great while they lasted.

A personal postscript: I attended the 1972 Rutland

the souls of mesmerized paraders (including Tom and Glynis) to power his ominous Firesword. Karnilla the Norm Queen appears and, making an unholy bargain with Sif, helps Thor defeat the Absorbing Man—and renders Loki blind just for good measure!

Back at the house, our comics friends react when someone (we know it's Felix Faust, even if this is a Marvel mag) makes off with Steve's rattletrap. The tale ends with Sif having left with Karnilla, and Hildegard sobbing to Thor that they may never see either again. TO BE CONTINUED. (Of course. They always are.)



Steve Englehart, Gerry Conway, Len and Glynis Wein suffer through three issues (spanning two comic publishing outfits) of car trouble in their 1972 trip to Rutland to attend the Halloween parade. This episode is from JLA #103.

Cheech Wizard, and the Pinis were Green Arrow and the Black Canary.

One guy at the party was dressed as the Hulk and used green vegetable dye for the skin tone (preceding John Belushi's rendition with the same media); but when it started to rain, the drops dried on him like little bits of dark green acne! "The madder Hulk gets, the more Hulk's skin breaks out!"

A good time was had by all. Thanks, Tom, for making it all possible, and for sharing it with us and the rest of the comics-reading public.

[CARL GAFFORD has worked in comics as colorist and production worker since the 1970s, when he was one of the original "Junior Woodchucks" at DC Comics. He wants especially to thank Minnie Nostalgia Zone for reference material for this piece. A longer version of this article appeared in the apa-zine CAPA-Alpha.]



Photos: DC and Marvel Comics

Comic book versions of  
Tom Fagan over the years

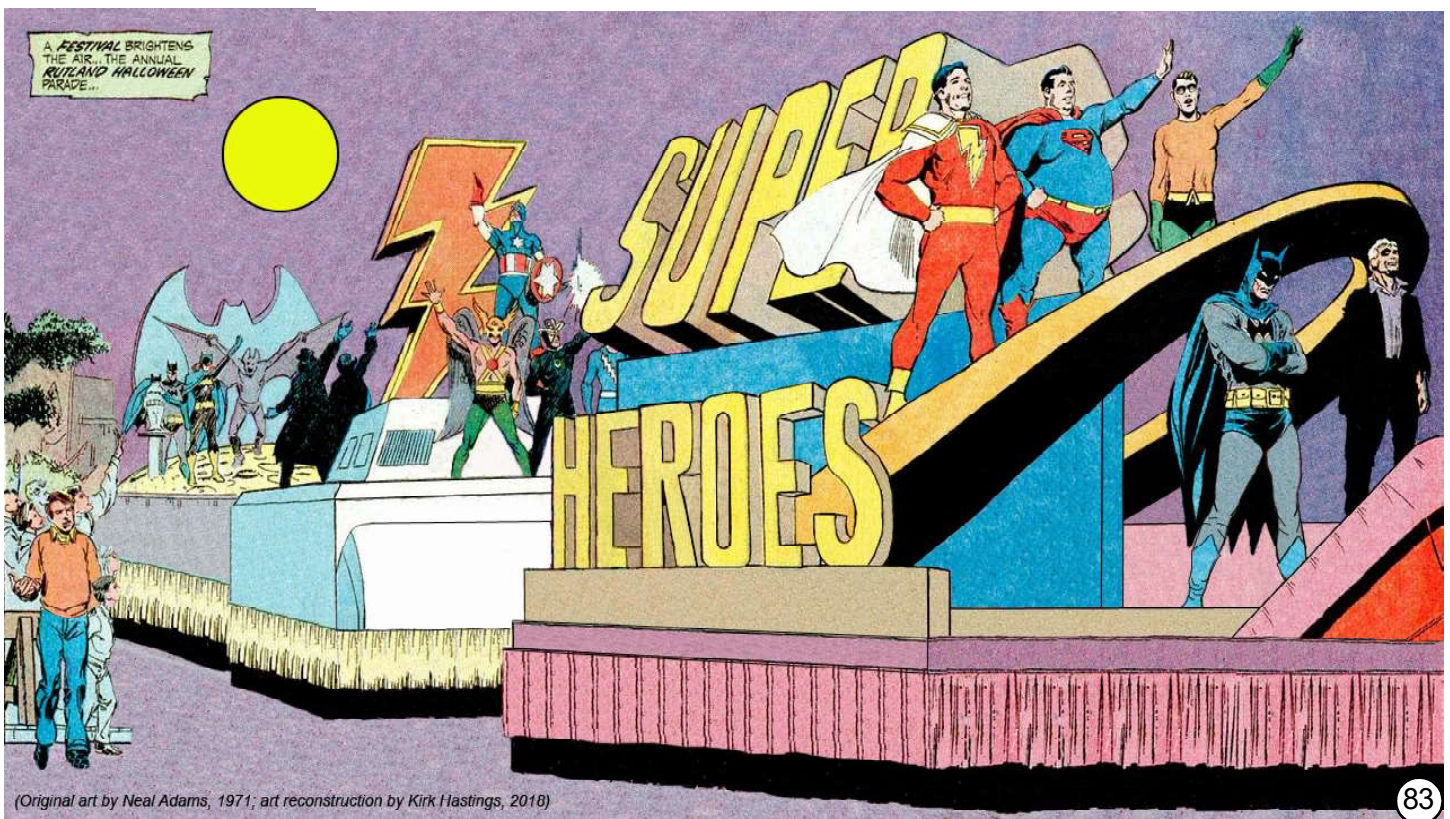


(right) Photo:  
WaRP Graphics

(right)  
From  
"Thunderbunny"  
No. 5, February,  
1986

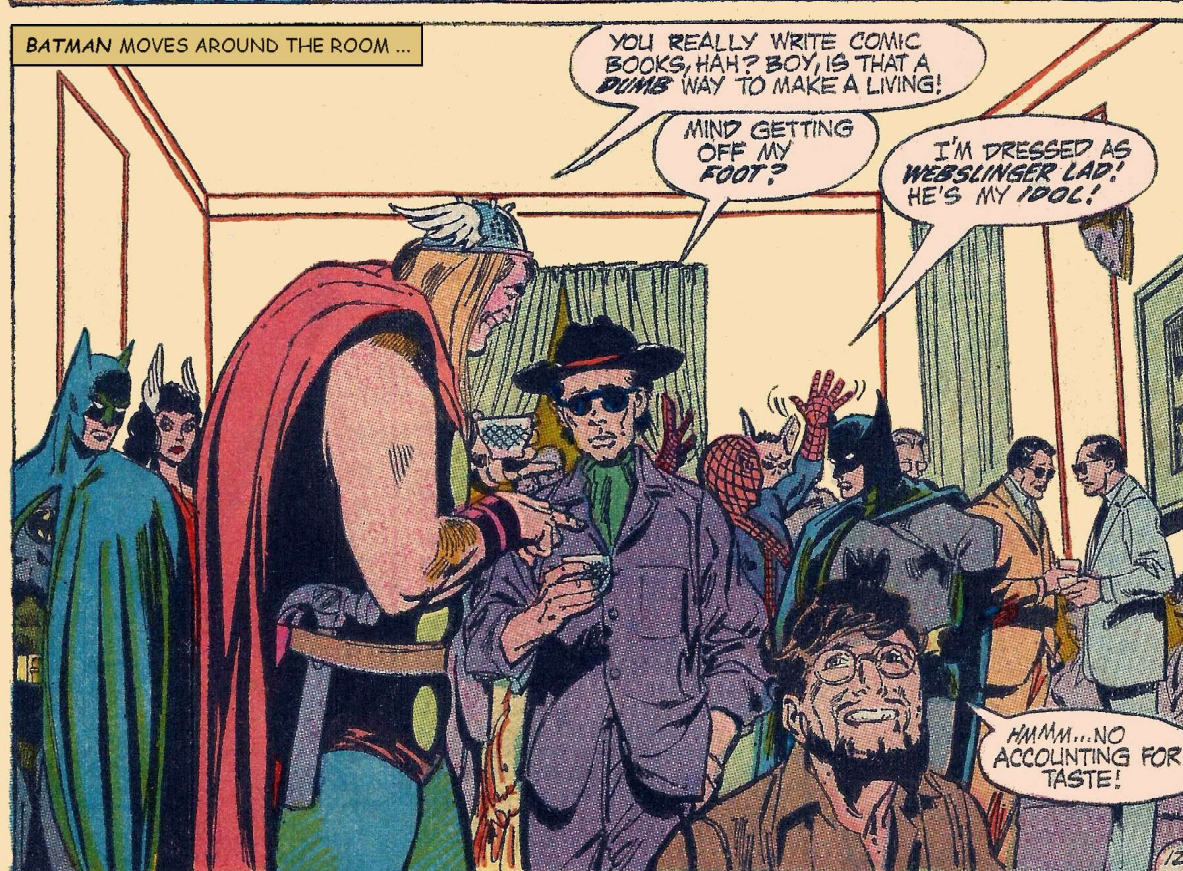


(below) Photo:  
DC Comics



(Original art by Neal Adams, 1971; art reconstruction by Kirk Hastings, 2018)

(From BATMAN #237, December, 1971)



(Slightly altered comic book panels by Kirk Hastings)

Photo: DC Comics

(Art: Neal Adams)



Photo: Alan Bradford

# The Clement Mansion Costume Parties

# "Hi! I'm Your Host, Tom Fagan!"

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN WHO LED THE PARADE

Conducted by Roy Thomas

Rutland, Vermont. Hardly a name that would seem destined to rank with Gotham City and Metropolis—and New York City, for that matter—as a mecca for super-heroes and super-villains... and for comic book professionals, as well. And yet, comics readers of a certain age may recall that, from 1970 through 1973, a total of seven stories in Marvel and DC comics were set on Halloween in this, the second largest city in that New England state. The "why" of that miniature phenomenon is one extraordinary fan of the comics—and Batman. All photos by Al Bradford. [The following interview was conducted by phone and transcribed by Jon B. Cooke.]

**Roy Thomas:** How did the Rutland parades get started?

**Tom Fagan:** The Rutland Recreation Department had a parade in 1959. I was taking my daughter out trick-or-treating, and we heard a band playing, and saw these kids from the two city high schools dressed as hoboes, Indians, pirates, and all. In front of them was a Jeep with the recreation commissioner, the mayor, and a kid dressed as Casper the Friendly Ghost—he was the first comic book character to be in the Rutland parade.

The parade went down Center Street Hill and they lost half their number—then they made a right angle and went up another hill, and they lost the rest of them. The next day I went up to the recreation office and talked to Commissioner Chief Cioffredi (I always called him "Commissioner" because it fit in with Batman). I said that was kinda nice but I think it could be better. He said,

"Fine, you're the general chairman." That's when it started.

**Roy:** If Casper was the first comics parader, when did Batman begin to take part in it?

**Tom:** When I spoke to Cioffredi, I said, "We should have a theme for this. Because it's Halloween and there are creatures of the night, you should have Batman as parade marshal to lead off the parade." (Of course, he never did because he was always late for parades and on the last float.) I settled on "Creatures of the Night" as the theme because that covered everything.

**Roy:** Even in those pre-TV show days, Batman was

still famous enough—everybody knew who Batman was.

**Tom:** I also thought (being a Batman freak) that Batman should get the recognition, and anyway, I couldn't fill out a Superman costume.



Tom Fagan played Batman in the Rutland parade from 1960-69. (Photo of Fagan and Sue O'Neil—as the Norse Goddess of Death, Hela.) Bottom left: Conventionmeister Phil Seuling as Captain Marvel.

**Roy:** Were there any other comic book characters?

**Tom:** In 1960 we had a Batman float. We just had a picture of a disproportionate Batman with the comic seal of approval and, in the corner, "12¢." Another float featured Frankenstein, and that fit right in—Frankenstein had been in comics. My daughter was supposed to ride on the float with me as Belfry the Bat, but she didn't. We always got infants to play Bat-Mite. I remember being on the float as Batman, feeling really cool and thinking nobody would recognize me. But the cops came along and said, "Hi, Tom."

I wrote letters to *Detective Comics* (which Julie Schwartz edited) saying Batman was now the leader of the Rutland Halloween Parade and we were establishing a tradition. As a matter of fact, I would write a letter yearly and he would publish it. I was quite unaware if anybody was reading them,

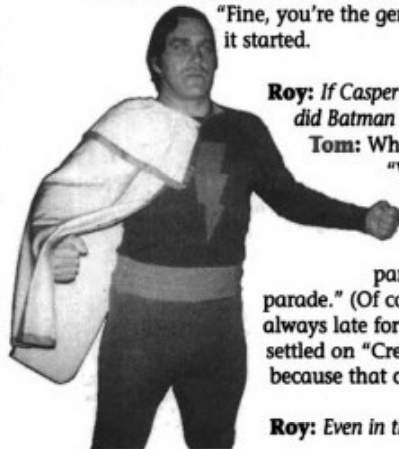
but they were, obviously.

**Roy:** Did anybody show up from those letters or contact you?

**Tom:** Not that I recall. Fandom was in its infancy at this point and I didn't realize there was this whole network of fans out there until Julie published your letter plugging *Alter Ego*. I got into fandom with Biljo White's *Komix Illustrated*, which included the first article I ever wrote—which was not about Batman but Ghost Rider. Soon, of course, I was also writing for Biljo's *Batmania*.

**Roy:** 1965 was the year you came to Dave Kaler's convention—as did I, as a brand new resident of New York and comic book professional. You were writing for Charlton, as I had done and as Dave was doing. You invited Dave and me to the Halloween parade. Dave took part in his Dr. Strange costume and I was in the Plastic Man one my aunt had made me for the convention, right before I moved to New York. Were there any other comic book characters besides them and Batman in that year's parade?

**Tom:** We had a number of Bat-people: Batwoman, Batgirl, Bat-Mite, and all of the Bat family. The Batfloat had a big blow-up of Plastic Man coming out of a jack-in-the-box from a *Police Comics* cover, and a blow-up of Dr. Strange. I told you I wanted to have that float sponsored by *Alter Ego*, so we got some Magic Markers and drew the *Alter Ego* mask on the back of the truck. People recognized Plastic Man and were yelling, "Plastic Man! Plastic Man!"



Near right:  
After appearing as  
Batman in ten Rutland  
parades, Fagan appeared  
as the Marvel hero/villain  
Nighthawk in 1970 in  
homage to Tom's appear-  
ance in *Avengers* #83.  
Far right: Andy Yanchus,  
DC colorist, as Man-Bat.  
Bottom right:  
An unknown reveler  
dressed as Luke Cage,  
Hero for Hire.



**Roy:** I remember I was surprised Plas was recognized. Tell us about those fabled Rutland Halloween parties.

**Tom:** At first they were held in an old Victorian house at 73 Pine Street, which suited the atmosphere greatly. '65 was the year we went out pumpkin-pilfering, carting 110 pumpkins and loading them up. We built a coffin to throw beer cans in—which worked wonders! We *didn't* have a single thing to pick up, and we had 200 to 300 people *there*!

**Roy:** I mostly remember the party—standing amid a packed crowd, talking to people, having a drink—the noise level was high. And every so often I would hear snatches of Barry McGuire's hit record "Eve of Destruction," playing over and over: "Think of all the hate there is in Red China," and "You don't believe we're on the eve of destruction!" I've never been able to hear that song since—even years later as Muzak in a super-market, believe it or not—without thinking back to that party.

You said—I can't recall it—I was out there painting a float, while Dave was—

**Tom:** You were being a dilettante while Dave had to finish his assignment for Charlton. That was the weekend he created Nighthshade.

**Roy:** Oh, I remember it now! I was doing some last-minute painting on a piece of a float right next to the house—I was outside all alone, and my hands were freezing, because it gets cold in Vermont in late October—and suddenly I think, "What am I doing out here?" You sold some stories to Charlton at that time, too, though unfortunately the comics all died before they got published.

**Tom:** I did *Son of Vulcan* and *Captain Atom*. Just my luck.

**Roy:** It was funny that you, Dave, and I were the three guys on that float as super-heroes, and the big break for all three of us had been writing stories for Charlton for \$4 a page! Like Sinatra sang on TV that fall, 1965 was "a very good year."

**Tom:** It was a good year, and I'm sure I wrote that parade up for one of the fanzines.

**Roy:** But over the next 2-3 years, the parade only slowly grew to attract comics people.

**Tom:** I would go to Phil Seuling's cons, and people would ask me about the parades because they had seen my letters in DC comics. I moved into what was called the Old Mansion—the Clement House, which had once been the governor's mansion. It was a place we hung out at because I was a reporter at the *Rutland Herald* and John Clement, who was 60 years old, was the city editor. John Clement got killed and people were breaking into the house, so I offered to *take care* of the place to prevent vandalism and theft. What I thought *was* going to be like a month stay lasted from 1968 until November 2, 1972!

Here *was* the perfect place for a party! There was just my wife, my daughter, two dogs, and me in this huge, huge house. Wow! There's one thing I had always wanted, and that was to throw a big

party. I felt that people who worked on the parade did an awful lot of work and didn't get anything but a thank-you note, and I thought we should have a party for them afterwards—so since we couldn't get the Recreation Department to do it, we did it first at 73 Pine Street. Then, after we moved into the Old House, we did it on a regular basis.

**Roy:** People really got into the spirit of things.

**Tom:** Oh, yeah. And it just kept growing! I remember that in '68 the doorbell started ringing at 12 o'clock and just kept ringing, and in came all the people I had invited. Tom Watkins was one of the first—he came as Wonder Warthog. They would come in costume after the parade. Then the TISOS people would show up—The Illegitimate Sons of Superman.

**Roy:** Marv Wolfman, Len Wein, Mark Hanerfeld...

**Tom:** Andy Yanchus, Rich Rubinfeld, the Vartanoff girls, Irene and Ellen. I was a member of that group, too, courtesy of meeting those people at the Seuling con. I formed my own group called the SOBs—the Sons of Batman. They showed up, and then came the weekend and you just wouldn't believe it: People just kept coming! There were all sorts of minor tragedies before the parade, like one year when Andy Yanchus had a beautiful Man-Bat costume and broke a rib in one of the wings—he was practically in tears before Mark Hanerfeld casually repaired it. And you came once in a professionally made Spider-Man costume. You left behind a bootie, which we found.

**Roy:** That costume was one of several made for a Macy's Thanksgiving parade—in '64, I think it was. Fabulous Flo Steinberg [Stan's corresponding secretary] told me Marvel had these costumes made—Spider-Man, Thor, a *Fantastic Four* one. Some actors were hired to wear them in the parade. But supposedly Marvel paid the actors in advance, and they got drunk and never showed up for the parade! [Laughs] So these costumes were lying around and I took them home to save them.

They were all worn on stage in the Marvel show at Carnegie Hall in January 1972. I was Spider-Man there, too. But, back to the Rutland parade...

**Tom:** I think of the floats. What stands out is Batman and Batgirl holding a pumpkin done by Jim Steranko. It was a beautiful piece as a backdrop. We had one that was "Batpower," done at the time of the flower children with Flower Power.

**Roy:** After the Batman TV show got on, did that give you a higher profile?

**Tom:** Oh, yeah, but I didn't like that profile! [Laughs]

**Roy:** Then you had to live down a whole different image of Batman that you didn't like?





Left: Fan Tom Hegeman in the official "Hi! I'm Your Host, Tom Fagan!" T-shirt (1973)—lifting a line from *Batman* #237. Middle: *Elfquest the Prequel*. Wendy and Richard Pini as Crystal and the Vision (1973). Right: Andy Yanchus as Man-Bat on a balcony of the legendary Clement Mansion. Bottom left: Peter Bradford as Thor (1971).

**Tom:** He was a clown on TV and I never thought of Batman as a clown. I was awfully glad when they returned him to his roots.

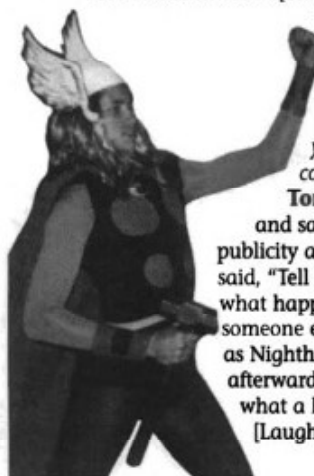
**Roy:** Dave and I and a few others were coming up to Rutland from 1965 on, but somehow the parade never made it into the wonderful world of professional comic books till after the 1969 parade, when I decided to set a story there. I wrote the "Lady Liberators" story in *Avengers* #83, in which I gave you, me, and my first wife Jeanie a few lines.

**Tom:** There was some artist that griped to Marv Wolfman, saying, "That Roy Thomas—all he wants to do is have stories that have him and his friends drawn into it!"

**Roy:** What's funny is how little I put myself, Jeanie, and you into that story. There was a little bit more in the next one, *Marvel Feature* #2, the second *Defenders* story. Later, when the other Rutland stories came along, Alan Weiss, Len Wein, and others were in practically every panel, running all over the place. Not that I minded—those stories were fun.

**Tom:** There was Denny [O'Neill] in his cowboy hat and glasses in the story he wrote...

**Roy:** It's always "self-aggrandizement" when someone you don't approve of is doing something. One of the problems I had in that 1970 *Avengers* was that I wanted to have John Buscema draw you in costume, but you always wore a Batman outfit! Even if we could've gotten away with it, I didn't think that Stan [Lee] and Martin Goodman [Marvel's publisher] would have wanted to risk getting an angry letter from DC. So I had you attired as Nighthawk, a character I'd designed as a parody of Batman—and later that very year, you did wear a Nighthawk costume!



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**Tom:** Alan Weiss came up to me and said, "Marvel gives you all this publicity and yet you still do Batman." I said, "Tell you what—why don't you see what happens at the parade tonight?" I had someone else play Batman, but there I was as Nighthawk. Len Wein came up to me afterwards and said, "Great costume, but what a horrible nose!" It was a *beak*! [Laughter]

**Roy:** Then there was the *Defenders* story in 1971, which of course reflected the 1970 parade and party....

**Tom:** That's the famous story with the Sub-Mariner swimming up Otter Creek and eating mussels. I thought that was so great!

**Roy:** Another thing in that story was the happy circumstances that there actually was a mountain in Vermont called Bald Mountain. I could use the title "Nightmare on Bald Mountain" and really make something of it that had a nice spooky atmosphere.

**Tom:** Not only that, but we also had a phenomenon: In the 1920s, '30s, and '40s (they seemed to be on a ten-year cycle), there were these mysterious lights—no one has ever figured out what they were.

**Roy:** I had Ross Andru draw a nine-panel page just showing Jeanie and me listening in rapt attention as you were talking about all these things that had happened. I was looking over that story recently, and I knew I didn't make up all that stuff—"Tom must've told me the whole thing."

**Tom:** When you expressed an interest in Bald Mountain, I checked with older people and I found out about it. When it happened, it happened for about a week and a half—the whole mountain would be in this red glow. There was another thing that we tossed in there, which didn't deal with Halloween but with Walpurgis Night. We were great for parties on odd days, and we held a Walpurgis Night party at an abandoned stone quarry on Pine Hill.

**Roy:** You New Englanders are weird!

**Tom:** Ayuh! And we're proud of it! Someone had written on the wall, "Cthulhu Rules!" and I had my picture taken near that. That showed up in one of the stories, too.

**Roy:** That same year came "The Night of the Reaper" in *Batman*. Do you remember how that one came about?

**Tom:** Denny was up with Bernie Wrightson. Clement House had 23 acres plus a dammed area where people went swimming (which figured into the story). One of the decorations that we had put up was a cupola with a blinking red light with an eagle that masqueraded as a bat, blinking on and off. Denny, Bernie, and others were out at the dam and they could see this blinking on and off, and they were talking about, "What if there was a madman loose? What if the light was used as a signal?" That's how Denny came up with the idea. Sol Harrison [DC production manager] sent his son up here to take pictures so Neal could work from actual photos. (The



Left: Len Wein as Morbius the Living Vampire (1972). Middle: Marv Wolfman as Aquaman and Tom Watkins as Solomon Grundy (1970). Right: Tom Fagan paints a Rutland float backdrop in 1970, as Marty Greim leans a Steranko blow-up against a wall. Bottom right: Unknown sorceress dressed as the Scarlet Witch.

story was late because someone stole Neal's portfolio, and I guess he had to do several of the pages over.) All of those pictures are genuine: The staircase, the front of the house, the cupola with the lights.

**Roy:** I didn't have the staff to take pictures—we just had to fake it! [Laughs] So those were the first three Rutland stories. Then in '72 there were three stories—two at Marvel and one at DC. If you read all three, they actually fit together.

**Tom:** They did, and that was quite an engineering feat. I think that all the DC and Marvel people running around in those stories weren't pointed out to those in charge.

**Roy:** Well, the editor-in-chief at Marvel in '72 would have been me! So, unless Stan complained...

**Tom:** In a way, those were the first crossovers in comics!

**Roy:** Yeah. I decided not to do any more after those first two, but I was glad to see other people do them. They seemed to work out pretty well.

**Tom:** Steve Englehart did one of those stories...

**Roy:** It's his car they're running around in, because he lived up in Connecticut then.

**Tom:** I remember it was failing at all the turns.

**Roy:** They used it in the story that way.

**Tom:** Steve had a girl in White River Junction at the time, so he had a vested interest in Vermont. He'd come up and be part of it. '72 was the last party at Clement House. Then we moved over to Rotary Field.

**Roy:** '72 was my last trip to Rutland, too. I remember it well because I drove up there in a rented car with Gerry Conway, his fiancée Carla, and Jeanie. We came back on Sunday, it was raining like hell, and I get home and collapse on the bed and I'm sprawled out when Jeanie comes in and tells me she's decided to leave me. [Laughs] That was the capstone to my Rutland parades. But happily the parades went on without me...

**Tom:** One year one of the pros brought the movie "The Incredible Shrinking Man" and they were showing it in the living room of the house. Here were all these people crammed in to see this old movie and they thought it was the most wonderful thing going! They were all like little kids! The people from New York went crazy over the dam and climbing trees, running around....

**Roy:** They were city boys out in the country! I grew up in a small town

and spent lots of weekends at my grandparents' farms, but these city boys never got out to the countryside at any other time!

**Tom:** Then there was the incident where three high school kids crashed one of the parties. I went out and said, "Hey, you weren't invited," and they said, "Yes, we were!" I said, "I would really appreciate it if you leave now," and all of a sudden they said, "Yessir!" and they took off. Then I realized that behind me was the Red Skull with an auto jack, Alfred the butler, and the Joker!

That first party at Rotary Field, in 1973—that's the one that ended up in *Penthouse*.

**Roy:** *Penthouse*?

**Tom:** There was this guy walking around, wearing glasses and saying he was Clark Kent. When people asked him why he wasn't in costume, he opened his shirt and he had a Superman shirt on underneath. Turned out he was a reporter for *Penthouse*, and an article on the parade and the party appeared in it. I have no idea why.

In 1974 the party was held in an abandoned church, with Cthulhu in the altar space. In '75 it was in the old recreation center, and that was kind of a disaster. After that, the parties ceased but the parades continued. They just got bigger and bigger.

One year there was a whole band dressed as Batman—another year a whole band dressed as the Pink Panther. There were less and less super-heroes, but there were Disney floats and the like—all still comic-oriented.

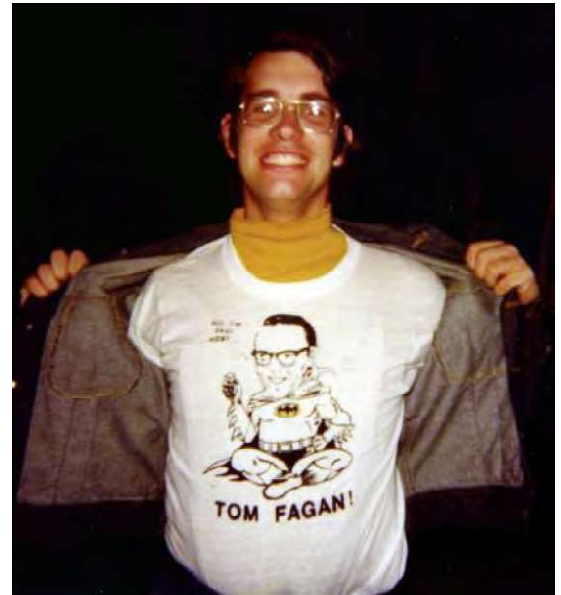
In fact, the parades continue today. They are one of the biggest events in Rutland, believe it or not. It's a legacy I'm kind of proud of.

**Roy:** You should be, Tom. They're a happy memory for a whole bunch of people.

[NOTE: More Al Bradford photos of Rutland Halloweens will be seen in the forthcoming revised edition of *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom* by Bill Schelly, from Hamster Press. And check out Carl Gafford's article on the funnybook side of Rutland—just turn the page!]



Photo: Alan Bradford



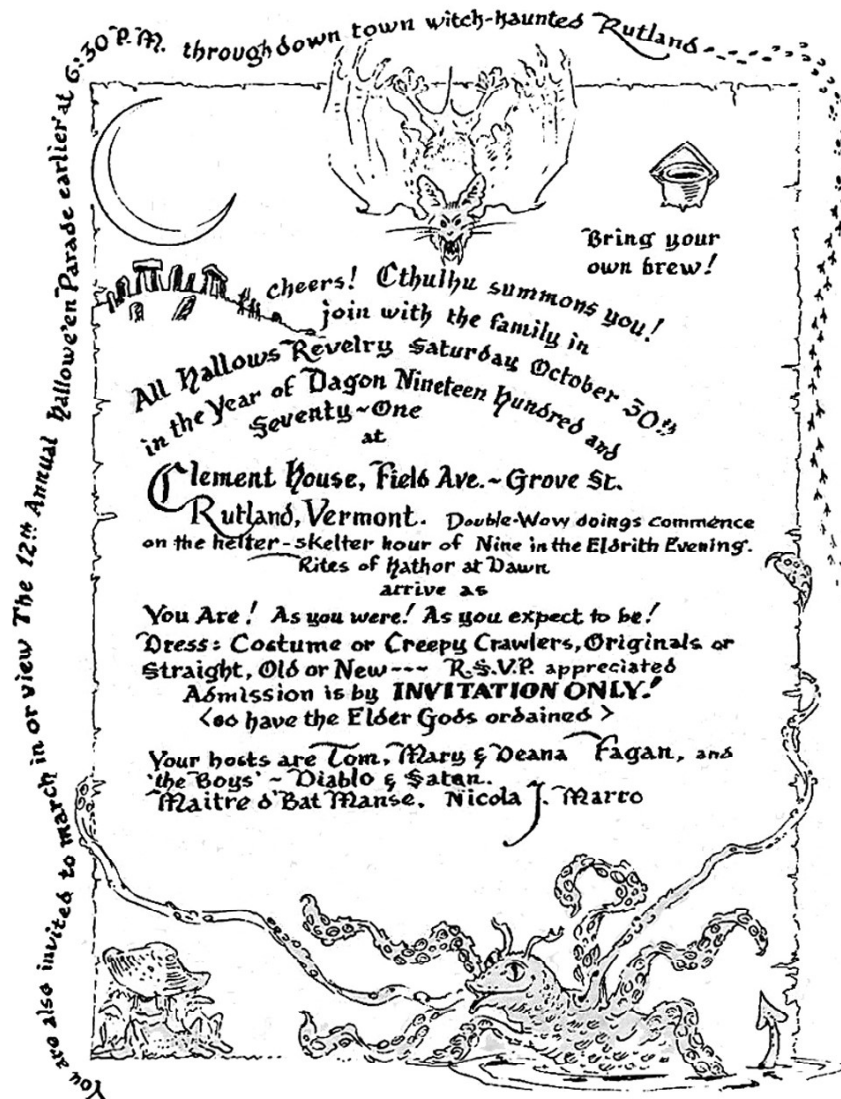
Tom Hegeman wearing  
the shirt, 1972



# TOM FAGAN!

(1972 t-shirt design by Al Bradford and Marty Greim)

(right) Clement House Costume Party invitation, 1971



(left) Jean Thomas as The Invisible Girl and Roy Thomas as Spider-Man, 1969  
(both of them worked for Marvel Comics)



# Rutland, Vermont



Photo: SkiDiva

## **“Ice” Batman**

**Totem Pole Ski Shop  
16.5 Pond Street,  
Ludlow, VT 05149**

**February, 2011**



# Latest Mural Will Be Unveiled

RUTLAND HERALD - October 29, 2015

*By Gordon Dritschilo, Staff Writer - [gordon.dritschilo@rutlandherald.com](mailto:gordon.dritschilo@rutlandherald.com)*

Superheroes have visited Rutland on many a Halloween, but the newest downtown mural aims to keep them here year-round.

At the end of the Rutland Halloween Parade on Saturday night, Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt. — a noted Batman fan who has had cameos in several movies — will unveil a mural on the side of the Gryphon Building commemorating the link between the parade and American superhero comics.

“It’s designed to celebrate the importance of the Rutland community,” building owner Mark Foley Jr. said. “It’s about a permanent way of commemorating what I think is a sense of pride in our community. It’ll be memorialized forever, hopefully.”

Tom Fagan, the longtime organizer of the parade, befriended a number of comic book writers in the ’60s and ’70s. Many of them came to Rutland for the notorious parties Fagan threw after the parade.

It became an in-joke among comic book writers to set stories at the Rutland Halloween Parade, similar to how science fiction screenwriters will work the number “47” into their scripts. Fagan himself was written in as a friend to Norse god turned superhero Thor.

Starting with The Avengers in 1970 — long before they made it anywhere near the big screen — battling the Masters of Evil, many iconic heroes from both of the major comic book publishers — Marvel and DC — made appearances at the parade and the parade even featured in a rare crossover story between the two companies.

The list includes Superman, Batman, the X-Men, the Incredible Hulk and Doctor Strange. The parade was still showing up in comics pages as late as 1996, in an issue of “Generation X,” and while it did not feature the parade, a Marvel comic published last year featured Spider Man retiring to Rutland, where Wolverine finds him scraping snow off his car.

Artist Kathryn Wiegers — who has painted four other downtown murals — said she knew none of this when she approached Foley about doing a mural on the side of the building.

“He knows I like to do things with a popping-out-of-the-building effect,” she said.

Wiegers suggested, given the name of the building, something involving a griffin. She said Foley countered with a comic-book theme.

“At first, I thought he was crazy,” she said. “Why would he want a comic hanging on the wall, all huge?”

When she heard the story, Wiegers was hooked.

“I thought it was awesome,” she said. “Why doesn’t everyone know about this? Every time I learn history about this region, I soak it up. The younger generation in Rutland could have real pride — this history is so cool.”

Wiegers said she had never been a comic-book person, but came to appreciate them doing research for the project. She said she particularly got a kick out of the story where the supervillain Juggernaut crashed Fagan’s post-parade party.

“I really liked the ones from that time period, late ’60s/early ’70s,” she said. “I liked how Batman — as time goes on, he gets so much more muscular. He’s like Cary Grant in the ’50s ... (and then) he got very, very steroid-looking.”

Foley said he had never really been a comic-book fan, either.

“I have no personal regard for it other than that I’m intrigued by it,” he said of the parade’s superhero connection. “I think it’s something that is unique. I think it’s special, and I think it’s something in Rutland we should recognize. We made an impression on writers that was so strong they intertwined us into multiple stories.”



Photo: Rutland Herald

# Batman Mural

by  
Kathryn Wiegers  
(2015)

Gryphon Building  
West Street and Merchants Row  
Rutland, Vermont





Rutland, Vermont





**Merchants Square, Rutland, Vermont**





# Articles

# Rutland Halloween Parade

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

**The Rutland Halloween Parade** is an annual event held on (or around) Halloween in the city of Rutland, Vermont, since 1960. The parade has a strong superhero theme and has been the setting for a number of comic book adventures. Local officials maintain that it is one of the largest and longest running Halloween parades in the United States.<sup>[1]</sup>

Tom Fagan, a local writer and comic book fan, is credited with having a hand in the parade's early development and superhero theme. He had letters and text pieces promoting the parade published in a number of DC and Marvel titles, including DC's *Detective Comics* #327 (May 1964) and Marvel's *Avengers* #88 (May 1971).<sup>[2]</sup> According to a 2006 *Boston Globe* article, "in 1965 ... the Joker, Plastic Man, and Dr. Strange were roaming the streets of Rutland, along with Batman (presumably Fagan, but like Bruce Wayne, the Caped Crusader wouldn't divulge his identity). More comic book heroes appeared every year...."<sup>[1]</sup> According to a 2008 *Comics Buyer's Guide* obituary of Fagan...

5,000 spectators watched the 11th annual parade in 1970, with marchers who included the Black Panther, Scarlet Witch, Black Widow, Medusa, Wasp, Quicksilver, Vision, Captain America, and Havok. Riding on a float were Thor and Sif, along with the Norn Queen. The Red Skull hitched a ride on the float for no known thematic reason.... Also present were Nighthawk, Batman, and Captain Marvel — and probably a few other DC heroes that Fagan was discreet enough not to mention. The parade kicked off, he noted, with the familiar cry of "Avengers Assemble!" and ended on the same note."<sup>[2]</sup>

The 2006 *Boston Globe* story explains that "... Fagan was friends with many comic book authors and artists, most of whom hailed from New York. Fagan persuaded some of them to take part in the Rutland Halloween Parade in comic book character costumes."<sup>[1][2]</sup> Many creators stayed as guests at Fagan's 12-room mansion outside of Rutland, which has since become the Antique Mansion Bed & Breakfast. Comic book creators known to have attended the parade over the years include Steve Englehart, Gerry Conway, Marv Wolfman, Bernie Wrightson, Dennis O'Neil, Roy Thomas, Alan Weiss, Wendy and Richard Pini, Dave Cockrum, and Len Wein.<sup>[3]</sup>

## After Fagan

By the mid-2000s Fagan was no longer directly involved in the planning of the parade. The popular event continued nonetheless, with Fagan attending as a guest in 2006 and 2007, sitting with the judges. Fagan had planned to attend the parade in 2008 but died on October 21 of that year. An article eulogizing Fagan in the *Rutland Herald* stated "Without Tom, there wouldn't be a Halloween parade in Rutland.... That's his legacy."<sup>[4]</sup> The parade celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2009.<sup>[5]</sup>

One of the most important features of the Halloween parade is over 100 "Skellies," a troop of kids aged 8-14 years old who perform acrobatics to the beat of Haitian drums.

## Appearances in comics

The Rutland Halloween Parade was first portrayed in comics with *The Avengers* #83, by Roy Thomas, John Buscema, and Tom Palmer (Marvel Comics, December, 1970).

In the 1970s, the Rutland Halloween Parade achieved a degree of fame when it was used as the setting of a number of superhero comic books, in titles published by industry rivals DC Comics and Marvel Comics. Tom Fagan was himself featured as a character in a number of these stories, usually depicted as an acquaintance of the title characters. Due to the nature of the masquerade parade, these issues often saw people dressed as Marvel heroes appearing in DC publications, and vice versa, marking some of the first (unofficial) inter-company crossovers in comics.<sup>[2]</sup> Caution was exercised, however, over widespread use of the competition's characters — Fagan (who in real life typically hosted the parade dressed as Batman), was usually drawn as Nighthawk in Marvel-published Rutland Halloween stories.<sup>[3]</sup>

In the fall of 1972, writers Steve Englehart, Gerry Conway, and Len Wein crafted a loose three-part story spanning titles from both companies. Each comic featured Englehart, Conway, and Wein (and Wein's first wife Glynis) interacting with Fagan and Marvel or DC villains (and heroes). Beginning in *Amazing Adventures* #16 (by Englehart with art by Bob Brown and Frank McLaughlin), the Beast hitches a ride from Englehart, who is driving the Weins and Conway to Rutland. The story terminates after Juggernaut attempts to steal Englehart's car.<sup>[3]</sup> The

action continues in *Justice League of America* #103 (by Wein, Dick Dillin and Dick Giordano), with Batman and other JLAers wind up leading the parade while attempting to capture Felix Faust. Faust ultimately steals Englehart's car, but is pulled over by the police.<sup>[3]</sup> In the third part of the unofficial crossover, *Thor* #207 (by Conway, John Buscema, and Vince Colletta), the three comics creators (and one wife) again visit Fagan, during which visit Englehart's car is stolen by the unseen and unmentioned DC villain Felix Faust, as shown in *JLA* #103.<sup>[3][6][7][8]</sup>

In the letters page of *What If?* #22 (August 1980), a reader asks, "Does Rutland, Vermont, annually become a nexus of realities similar to that existing in the swamp near Citrusville, Florida?" Marvel editor Mark Gruenwald, writing as The Watcher, responds, "While the nexus in Citrusville is a natural aperture, the nexus near Rutland is an artificial one that fluctuates in size and accessibility. For reasons that I have not investigated, it has not been opened in recent years."<sup>[9]</sup>

In 1986, the parade again appeared in WaRP Graphics' *Thunderbunny* #5. The town of Rutland was portrayed in DC's *Animal Man* #50 (1992), but not the Halloween parade itself. Most recently, the parade was featured in Marvel Comic's *Generation X* #22 (1996) and *Superboy and the Ravers* #16 (1997) from DC Comics.

### Chronological list of appearances

*Note:* Not all of these appearances feature the Halloween Parade. Some feature Tom Fagan and some simply the town of Rutland.

- *Avengers* #83 — "Come On In, ...The Revolution's Fine!" by Roy Thomas, John Buscema, and Tom Palmer (Marvel, Dec. 1970)
- *Batman* #237 — "Night of the Reaper!" by Dennis O'Neil, Neal Adams, and Dick Giordano (DC, Dec. 1971)
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Photo: Rutland Herald



# Rutland's Hallowed Tradition is a Treat

*By Peggy Shinn*

Globe Correspondent / October 22, 2006

RUTLAND, Vt. — It's a warm night in early October, and two men at Fabian Earth Moving, a construction company in West Rutland, are dismantling a manure spreader. The humble piece of farm machinery is headed for a glamorous future: On Oct. 31 it will grace a 45-foot-long float themed "Cowboys and Cowgirls" that will be vying for a trophy at the 47th annual Rutland Halloween Parade.

No prize money is at stake, just bragging rights, but the employees of Fabian Earth Moving, who have created prize-winning floats for the parade since 1994, put their hearts and souls into the effort. Before they are through, the flatbed of an 18-wheeler will be transformed into a working farm, complete with barn, animals, and of course the manure spreader, the whole scene animated, lighted, and entertaining the crowd with country music and a human cast of 48.

"It's a performance," says Marcy Galligan, who spends an entire year creating costumes for the float.

Why all this effort for a Halloween parade?

Over the past 47 years, the parade has taken on a life and traditions of its own. This year it is expected to draw close to 90 entrants and attract 12,000 to 15,000 spectators, who stand six to eight deep along the 1.2-mile-long route that threads through downtown. It's like Mardi Gras in October, with candy being tossed instead of beads. Local officials claim it is the nation's largest — and longest running — parade on All Hallows Eve. No one has bothered to try to substantiate this claim, however. They're probably having too much fun.

"For as long as I can remember, it's always been an important part of the community," EJay Bishop says. Bishop, 46, grew up here and is superintendent of the Rutland Recreation and Parks Department, which has organized the parade since its debut. "For whatever reason, Rutlanders have gravitated toward the Halloween holiday. Even people who don't like Halloween love the parade. It's a tradition. It's cool to do," Bishop says.

No one remembers exactly who conceived of the parade back in 1960, when it consisted of a bunch of costumed schoolchildren walking down Center Street to the tunes played by two local high school marching bands. Newspaper accounts credit John Cioffredi, who was recreation department superintendent.

But Bishop says Tom Fagan, a local comic book fan, had a hand in it. He was friends with many comic book authors and artists, most of whom hailed from New York. Fagan persuaded some of them to take part in the Rutland Halloween Parade in comic book character costumes. In 1965, the local newspaper reported that the Joker, Plastic Man, and Dr. Strange were roaming the streets of Rutland, along with Batman (presumably Fagan, but like Bruce Wayne, the Caped Crusader wouldn't divulge his identity). More comic book heroes appeared every year, and in the 1970s the parade was featured in the text and art of several comic books. Although Fagan is no longer involved with the parade — and neither are the comic book artists — it has maintained its momentum over the decades. For many local businesses, schools, clubs, and other groups, the parade is the focal point of fall.

The West Rutland School band, about 40 students from a school of 500 in grades kindergarten through 12, prepares as if it were marching in the Tournament of Roses Parade. "The parade is the biggest deal," band director Kate Cromer says from her office, a room decorated with "Best Costumed Marching Band" pennants and trophies.

Cromer picks the music, then the costumes over the summer, and the band and color guard begin practicing the tunes and the choreographed marching moves the day school opens in August. One year, everyone dressed as characters from the movie "Shrek," green faces and all. Last year, the theme was "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," which featured waving broomsticks while everyone marched in lock-step. Cromer won't divulge this year's theme.

Then there's the eerie pulsating beat of Drum Journeys of Earth, a percussion group that dances in creepy skeleton jumpsuits. Inspired by Cirque du Soleil and the Bread-and-Puppet Theater, the 70-plus members of Drum Journeys of Earth and dancers from a local studio writhe like ghouls possessed while beating drums and carrying 12-foot-tall puppets.

"I find it wonderfully amusing that Rutland, which I see as quite conservative, puts its whole heart into [the Halloween Parade]," says Gary Meitrott, director and founder of the percussion group. "It's a ritual of celebration. Our little town in Vermont has decided that we want to celebrate this time of year."

Besides the bands, the floats bring the parade to life. The parade has its share of simple, handmade

floats, with Magic Marker-colored maple leaves hanging from hay wagons and convertibles carrying waving, slightly embarrassed Pumpkin Princesses. But at least a dozen floats take some serious engineering to build. One year, a city bus was completely covered to look like the Hogwarts Express from the Harry Potter movies. Another year, a 5-foot-tall rotating eagle was surrounded by patriotic-looking characters.

"If people who [make] the floats didn't embrace it, the parade wouldn't be what it is," says Cindi Wight, Rutland's recreation director.

When it comes to building floats, it's hard to beat Fabian Earth Moving. Much like a character from the TV show "Junkyard Wars," John Center, who runs Fabian with his wife, Chris, forages for whatever is needed to create the floats. Over the summer, he found the manure spreader abandoned in a ditch. Last year, he happened upon four large satellite dishes — the kind that E.T. could use to phone home — to create a float entitled "Out of This World."

Center and his crew — family, friends, and employees — fastened the satellite dishes together to make two flying saucers that sat atop the flatbed, which Center purchased several years ago solely for use as a parade float. Chris Center's brother, Ed Fabian, pulls the float each year with a 1957 B81 Mack truck (the same antique truck he used in 1994 to drive the national Christmas tree from Vermont to Washington, D.C.).

With hydraulics on the legs to make the saucers move, blinking lights glowing from within, music blasting from concert-sized speakers, and everyone dressed in alien masks and metallic green capes, the float made the crowd go wild — prompting spontaneous applause and dancing in the streets. It won the "Most Original" trophy, displayed proudly with Fabian's other parade trophies in a cabinet near the company office.

"When we first started, we were taking second place," John Center says. "Well, second place is first loser. I had to figure out how to conquer this, so I started talking to people making [winning] floats and getting ideas. Some secrets are: It's got to be big. The music has to relate to the crowd. It has to be lit. And you have to have glitz."

What manure spreaders have to do with glitz remains to be seen. But rain or shine, all trick-or-treating will cease in Rutland at 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 31, and the floats will start their engines. For the next two hours, Halloween takes to the streets. It's not Fat Tuesday, but it might as well be.

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Photo: PEGTV



# THE RUTLAND HALLOWEEN PARADE: WHERE MARVEL AND DC FIRST COLLIDED

By Eric Larnick - October, 2010

This Saturday October 30, Rutland, Vermont will host its 51st Annual Halloween Parade. The attraction is the largest and longest-running Halloween parade in the United States — and it owes its birth to comic books. The parade got off its feet thanks to Tom Fagan, a local reporter and super-fan of comics. With each year that he ran the parade, more comic creators got involved, creating an ahead-of-its-time cosplay showcase that eventually made its way to the pages of Marvel, DC and beyond. In fact, Rutland holds the distinction for inspiring the first crossover ever between Marvel and DC Comics.

ComicsAlliance spoke with legendary comics scribe Steve Englehart — one of the architects of that landmark crossover and the man who wrote more Rutland stories than anyone — as well as with parade organizers to learn about the complete comic book history of Rutland's Halloween Parade.

## HOW IT STARTED

Following the first Rutland Halloween Parade's lackluster showing in 1960, a motivated Tom Fagan went to Rutland's Recreation Department, where — as he later remarked to *Alter Ego* magazine — communicated, "We should have a theme for this. Because it's Halloween and these are creatures of the night, you should have Batman as parade marshal to lead off the parade."

Fagan was allowed to shape the parade in his vision, starting in 1961 with a Batman float. Soon, as Fagan recalled, "I wrote letters to *Detective Comics* saying Batman was now the leader of the Rutland Halloween Parade and we were establishing a tradition."

It wasn't long before Fagan's correspondence as a fan turned into an even friendlier relationship with the creators of his favorite comics, much to the benefit of the parade. "As a long-time contributor to comic book fanzines, Fagan began to form relationships with several staff writers at DC Comics in New York City, ultimately inviting them up to Rutland to join in with the festivities," said Dom Cioffi, Marketing/Outreach of Rutland's PEGTV.

## RUTLAND'S COMIC BOOK DEBUT

After visiting the parade, comic book writer Roy Thomas was inspired to set a story there. In *Avengers #83*, "Come On In ...The Revolution's Fine!" (Dec. 1970), Tom Fagan — dressed as Nightwing of The Defenders — invites the Avengers to be his guests of honor at the 11th Annual Parade. The parade is attacked by the Masters of Evil, who hijack Fagan's float. The fight turns into a three-way battle when the Lady Liberators enter the fray. The issue was not only set at the parade, but also featured appearances from Roy Thomas himself, along with wife, Jeannie.

The next year in *Batman #237*, "Night of the Reaper!" (Dec. 1971), creators Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams were inspired to craft a story set at Rutland. In the tale, a vendetta between a concentration camp survivor and a fugitive Nazi plays out in the backdrop of the Halloween parade. Batman and Robin try to stop the violent bloodshed that ensues, as innocent revelers dressed up like the Caped Crusader and the Boy Wonder get caught in the middle. Dick Grayson attends the parade with his friends — comic book creators Alan Weiss, Bernie Wrightson and Gerry Conway. Batman's fight spills into Tom Fagan's mansion, where Denny O'Neil, Len Wein and Mark Hanerfeld are in attendance.

## THE FIRST EVER MARVEL/DC CROSSOVER

As more comic book creators ventured north, their stories about the parade grew grander. Englehart explained: "[Tom Fagan was] just a real friendly guy... [and] a real friend to everybody. He could get you caught up in his enthusiasms and share yours... Denny and Neal [said] 'this is a cool evening' and they drew that story, wrote that story and made it look like a cool evening. So next year it's like 'let's just go.'"

Along with Len Wein and Gerry Conway, Englehart made comic book history by writing the first Marvel/DC crossover (albeit unofficially) by setting it at the Rutland Halloween Parade. In Englehart's *Amazing Adventures #16*, "...And the Juggernaut Will Get You... If You Don't Watch Out!" (Jan. 1973) Gerry Conway, Steve Englehart and Len & Glynnis Wein come across Hank McCoy a.k.a. the Beast, on their way to the Rutland Parade. The blue-furred mutant finally gets to town, just in time to stop a rampaging Juggernaut, who has lost control of his

powers. He attempts to steal Englehart's car but is intercepted by Beast, and disappears into the woods.

Then in Len Wein's *Justice League of America* #103, "A Stranger Walks Among Us!" (Dec. 1972) the four comic creators make their way to the mansion of Tom Fagan, who is sporting his best Batman costume. The Phantom Stranger leads the Justice League to Rutland, on the suspicion that Felix Faust is attempting to take advantage of a weaker dimensional state and summon ghosts to our reality.

The JLA meet up with Tom, who asks them to ride in the parade. While waving to the crowd, Faust's plan kicks into effect, and the JLA must contend with a town full of citizens gaining the powers of their costumed characters, including Glynnis Wein, who turns into Supergirl. Len, Steve and Gerry go after Glynnis, while the Phantom Stranger intervenes to save the League. With his plan foiled, Faust escapes town — by stealing Englehart's car.

Finally in Gerry Conway's *The Mighty Thor* #207, "Firesword!" (Jan. 1973), Tom Fagan has switched into an authentic-looking Nighthawk costume, but has fallen under the mind control of Loki, who is summoning Absorbing Man to destroy the town. Thor, Sif and Hildegard intervene to defeat Absorbing Man and Loki, blinding the trickster god in the process. Loki hears the Faust-driven stolen car of Steve Englehart and rushes after it, but his blind state leads him right off a cliff. Len, Steve and Gerry locate the missing (and now human again) Glynnis, who doesn't quite remember what just happened.

Meanwhile, comic fans had their mind blown after reading the very first DC/Marvel crossover. For Englehart, Wein, and Conway it was the chance to try something new. As Englehart told ComicsAlliance, "I guess the first year, the comic book guys were just a handful amongst the revelers, but the second year there were a whole bunch of comic book people who thought it would be a good idea to go to Vermont for Halloween. Len Wein, Gerry Conway were up there with me, Glynnis Wein was up there — Gerry and Len and I got sitting around talking about the whole Rutland thing and we figured Denny had done an interesting story and we wondered could we do something interesting with it, and somehow out of that came the crossover."

Most amazingly to Englehart, the crossover idea had modest, yet imaginative motivations. As he elaborated: "The idea of doing a crossover between Marvel and DC, I'm not sure anything like that had been done before, but it certainly seemed like a radical concept and we knew that we had to be subtle (laughs) and each story had to stand on its own, but we really worked it out. It's really worthwhile to read those stories back to back to back — It didn't matter to us that one was at DC and two were at Marvel — I think it was us being creative, thinking what would be really cool to do and the spark of all that was the Rutland parade which was really cool and it deserved something cool."

## THE LEGENDARY COSTUME PARTIES

In addition to the parades, the comic-friendly after-parties were another legendary component of the Rutland Halloween experience. Dom Cioffi from Rutland admitted: "Ironically, the earliest parades were known more for the late night parties than for the actual downtown processions. Fagan's friends, both local and from out of town, went to great lengths to build interesting floats and highly involved costumes, but the after-hours parties are where most of the 'trickery' occurred."

As one of the costumed revelers, Englehart has vivid memories of the parties, which took place in an old mansion: "It's not all that unusual today if you go to a comic book convention today, you're going to see a lot of people in costume. But in the early '70s, that was not a common situation. And even at conventions, [they] were a lot more button-down. So on Halloween night, well after midnight, walking around this mansion in Lovecraftian Vermont and seeing Dracula and the Hulk and Wonder Woman walking around, it was a unique situation and on Fagan's end, handled extremely well."

## KEEPING A TRADITION ALIVE

Steve Englehart has a unique distinction of writing more stories set at the Rutland Halloween Parade than anyone else. For him, the motivation was simple: "It continued to be fun, and after awhile... [I thought] there should be a Rutland parade story every Halloween. I thought Tom Fagan was a very cool guy; I thought what he was doing was very cool. I just wanted to remind people of it and thank Tom for it, for a little while longer."

## MEMORIES OF THE PARADE

Although Fagan passed away in 2008, the parade has endured as his legacy. As the *Rutland Herald* wrote in its October 23 issue that year, "Tom Fagan was a number of things during a lifetime of newspaper reporting, raising a family and assuming legendary status in the comic book community. But in Rutland, where the 76-year-old lived

before his death on Tuesday, he was known as 'Mr. Halloween' — the man who helped create an All-Hallows-Eve procession of ghosts, ghouls and costumed greats in the 1950s that endures today as the biggest Halloween parade in the state."

Englehart still reflects fondly on not just the parade and the season, but on the positive effect that came from seeing so many comic book fans out in attendance. As he explained: "This is Halloween night, so it has its own vibe to it and seeing all these people having a wonderful time, but all in costume, and good costumes. These were pretty much homemade costumes. You weren't just able to drop down and buy yourself a Captain America costume at the store like you could do today. People got into it and as young comic book people we appreciated it and really vibed off of people who got into it. My memories of it are just the panorama of it, being on the main street of Rutland and seeing floats go by and the cars and the costumes and the Halloween vibe and little kids watching and candy to be had. I remember the whole thing, the spectacle of it — And afterward, we'd get to the mansion and party until dawn and crash (laughs)."

## WHAT TO EXPECT THIS YEAR

The Rutland Halloween Parade begins at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, October 30, followed by the Center Street block party. Curious fans can tune into PEGTV.com later in the week to watch the full parade online. As for what costumes and attractions to expect this year, according to Cioffi, "The float creators always try to one-up each other. It drives their creativity and pushes them to produce better material. But each year's floats are kept under cover by the creators who maintain strict codes of silence. So no one knows what to expect."

In addition to the parade, the weekend will be filled with activities including: the Hathaway Farm corn maze, Deadnberry Mortuary haunted tour, Fright Nights at The Wilson Castle, the Bones Brothers Band, Holiday screenings, Campus Trick-or-Treating, Pumpkins in the Park, the "Running Scared 5K" road race, and more.

*Special thanks to Cindi Wight, Rutland Recreation Director, Dom Cioffi of PEGTV Marketing/Outreach, Marcy Galligan and Steve Englehart. Englehart's two novels 'The Point Man' and 'The Long Man' are available from Tor Books. For more information, check out [SteveEnglehart.com](http://SteveEnglehart.com).*

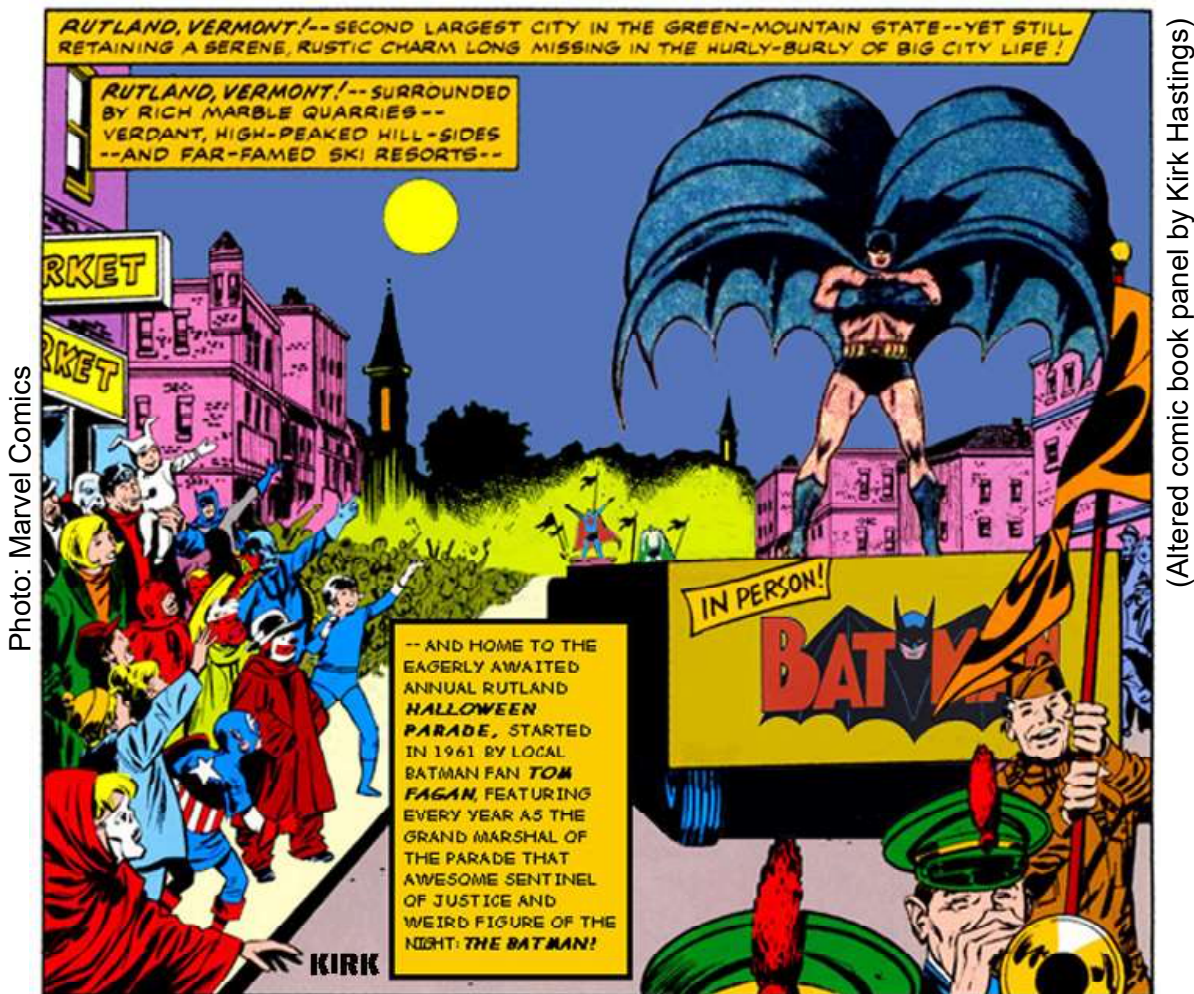


Photo: Marvel Comics

(Altered comic book panel by Kirk Hastings)

# Meanwhile, in Rutland... A Pop-Culture Inventory

May 14, 2014

By Jim Sabataseo | Correspondent

Rutland, Vermont — A sleepy town with a proud history. Once home to the trains of industry and deep quarries of fortune, its hills and valleys are still a paradise for adventure seekers and lovers of nature. But don't let this bucolic burg fool you, true believers! In Rutland, mysteries abound. It's truly a tale to astonish.

While Rutland's actual history makes for an interesting read, the city's fictional past is almost as storied as that of Gotham and Metropolis. The birthplace of heroes and villains alike, Rutland has, over the years, played host to time-traveling airplanes, sinister shapeshifters, interdimensional portals, gods, demons, celebrities, and enough superheroes to fill the Baxter Building.

What follows is an inventory of Rutland's many appearances in the worlds of comics, television, and film.

## Comic timing

The origin of Rutland's representation in comic books begins with one person: Tom Fagan. A Rutland Herald reporter and avid comic book fan, Fagan and the city's annual Halloween Parade served as the MacGuffin for dozens of adventures in both Marvel and DC comics, including a famous, unauthorized inter-company crossover.

As the parade's popularity grew under Fagan's creative direction during the 1960s, his comic book creator friends became regular attendees, even dressing up as their favorite characters. After the parade, revelers would celebrate into the night at a local mansion where Fagan threw his famous Halloween parties.

This real-world connection spilled over into Marvel's fictional universe in "Avengers" #83 (1970). In the issue, titled "Come On In ... The Revolution's Fine!" (by Roy Thomas, John Buscema, and Tom Palmer), Fagan invites Earth's Mightiest Heroes to Rutland as the parade's guests of honor.

But the festivities are disrupted, as they will be, when the Masters of Evil hijack Fagan's float, which, apparently, was the key to some ill-defined bid for world domination (it's comic books; just go with it.) The Avengers prevail, and from then on Rutland became part of comic book lore.

A year later, Batman and Robin show up at the parade in "Batman" #237 (by Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams) in pursuit of a fugitive Nazi. The story culminates with a brawl at Fagan's costume party, where the Caped Crusader emerges victorious.

While both companies list Rutland in their respective online databases, Marvel has always had a bit more fun with incorporating the city into its universe. According to the listing, the area is a source of mystical power and draw for supernatural beings.

Case in point, Rutland is the birthplace of Master Pandemonium, a Marvel villain and Englehart creation with supernatural powers, who was a major antagonist in "West Coast Avengers" in the 1980s.

One hotspot in particular is Bald Mountain. In 1972's "Marvel Feature" #2 (by Roy Thomas, Ross Andru, and Sal Buscema), Dr. Strange and his fellow Defenders Hulk and Namor the Sub-Mariner battle the evil Dormammu and his cult of worshippers on Halloween night.

Then, in 1973, legendary "Avengers" scribe Steve Englehart, along with Len Wein and Gerry Conway, made comic book history by setting the first-ever Marvel/DC crossover in Rutland. For comic books fans, this was huge. The first official crossover would not occur until 1976's "Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man."

The story, which takes place across three titles, features the creators and Fagan getting caught in the middle of a series of amazing events while visiting Rutland on Halloween. The three books ostensibly tell standalone stories (to avoid any legal issues), but also work together to span two distinct comic book universes as members of the Avengers and Justice League battle a panoply of villains, including Juggernaut, Felix Faust, Absorbing Man, and Loki.

Naturally, the day is saved, but Rutland would continue to be the setting of many more adventures in subsequent Marvel and DC titles.

Clearly, the creators had fun inserting themselves and Fagan in the stories. It was a nod to a friendship, which transcended companies.

"It didn't matter to us that one was at DC and two were at Marvel," Englehart told Comics Alliance in a 2010 interview. "I think it was us being creative, thinking what would be really cool to do and the spark of all that was the Rutland parade, which was really cool and it deserved something cool."

Creators writing themselves into the story is nothing new. Comics have always had a tendency to be

metatextual. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby did it all the time, making cameos in early issues of “Fantastic Four,” “Daredevil” and “Spider-Man.” Lee still does it, showing up in every single Marvel film to date.

Outside mainstream Marvel/DC continuity, Rutland is also the birthplace of the GI Joe Snow Job, who has been featured in the comic, TV, and action figure universes. An arctic trooper and Olympic biathlete, Snow Job is a skilled marksman, skier and, allegedly, something of a con man, giving his codename a double meaning likely overlooked by disappointed eight year olds who wanted Storm Shadow, but got the guy with skis.

### **Reel life**

If you’ve ever seen Rutland on the big screen, you’re likely watching a David Giancola production. The local filmmaker and owner of Edgewood Studios has shot a number of films in the city, with many actually being set in the city. It’s a thrill familiar to any Rutlander who’s been channel surfing late at night and caught a glimpse of a tidal wave rushing down Merchants Row or a shootout in the Howe Center.

The best known of these films is “Time Chasers” (1994), about an inventor who uses a time-traveling airplane to save the future from an evil corporation. The film had the dubious honor of being featured on the cult TV show “Mystery Science Theater 3000” in 1997.

The series, in which a man and two puppets watch movies while adding their own humorous but often withering commentary, requires thick skin for those involved in the film under review. But Giancola took it in stride, even hosting a screening party for the episode.

“It gave it a whole new life and cult status that endures to this day,” he says. Plus, the licensing fees helped him cover production costs, which was a definite bonus.

“Time Chasers,” which was Giancola’s first feature — he started production of it when he was 19 — has remained one of his most popular films. People have made trips to visit locations from the film. Edgewood Studios even sells the vintage Castleton State College shirt actor Matthew Bruch wears for much of the film on its website.

Despite the “MST3K” lampooning, “Time Chasers” is a solid film. It received 3.5-stars (out of five) in the Video Movie Guide. According to MST3K Wiki, that makes it one of the highest-rated films the show has ever screened. Indeed, the film earned Giancola and company a Gold Award at the Houston International Film Festival in 1994, and was selected for a screening at that year’s AFI Fest in Los Angeles. Never seen it? The full “MST3K”



**David  
Giancola**

episode is available on YouTube ([goo.gl/Z7UcNK](http://goo.gl/Z7UcNK)).

Over the years, Giancola's films have brought a number of actors to Rutland. His 2000 film "The Newcomers" stars Kate Bosworth, Paul Dano, and — in a curious Rutland comic book connection — Chris Evans well before he picked up Captain America's shield.

In 2001, Jesse Eisenberg ("The Social Network") got his first lead role in Giancola's "Lightning: Fire from the Sky." And here's another bit of comic book synchronicity: Eisenberg is slated to be Lex Luthor in next year's "Batman vs. Superman" film.

When asked why Rutland is the backdrop for some of his films — "at least a dozen" by his count — Giancola cites production costs. "We couldn't afford to change it," he says, explaining that changing the lettering on a firetruck or all the license plates was too expensive. Setting the films in Rutland just made sense.

And he's not done. In the coming year, Giancola has two films slated for production, one of which he reveals will be set in Rutland.

Outside the Giancola-verse, Rutland made a brief cameo in the Farrelly Brothers' comedy "Me, Myself & Irene" (2000). During a scene in which the authorities are searching for Jim Carrey's character, a copy of the Rutland Herald is held up to the camera. It's one of those blink and you miss it moments, but it still counts.

### As seen on TV

As any fan of "The West Wing" knows, Rutland gets a mention by none other than President Josiah Bartlet in season three of the famous NBC series. Bartlet references a speech delivered by George Perkins Marsh "to rouse the agricultural community of Rutland, Vermont."

Marsh was born in Woodstock, Vt. He was a diplomat and philologist, and — in a bit of Vermont trivia that should surprise no one — is thought to be America's first environmentalist. His writings, which discussed deforestation and desertification, would become the foundation on which the ecology and sustainability movements would be built.

And Bartlet is telling the truth. Marsh really did address the Agricultural Society of Rutland County on Sept. 30, 1847. Read the speech for yourself ([goo.gl/xCqdJu](http://goo.gl/xCqdJu)).

A decidedly more sinister visitor passed through in a 2011 episode of the Fox sci-fi series "Fringe," when a murderous shapeshifter makes a pitstop in Rutland with a kidnapped scientist. Most of the action takes place at the sleepy Newhart gas station (easter egg!) on the outskirts of town, where the shapeshifter dispatches a nosy state trooper before heading out of town.

This inventory is by no means definitive. In the literary world, for example, H.P. Lovecraft makes mention of Rutland in "Whisper in the Darkness." And author Mary McGarry Morris — a Rutland native — has set several books in a fictional version of Rutland's past.

There's most certainly more. But why? What makes this small, blue-collar Vermont city such a compelling subject? Perhaps Marvel was right; maybe something supernatural is at work here.

*— Jim Sabatano is a freelance writer and Rutland native*

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# Annual Rutland, Vermont Halloween Parade Makes Comic Book History

Rutland's Annual Halloween Parade owes its international popularity to some equally popular comic book superheroes.

In the early 1970s, the popular Rutland Halloween Parade was used as the setting of a number of superhero comic book stories, including yarns in *Batman* (issue #237), *Justice League of America* (issue #103), *Freedom Fighters* (issue #6), *Amazing Adventures* (issue #16), *The Avengers* (issue #83), and *The Mighty Thor* (issue #207).

The Rutland Halloween Parade remains an annual event held on Halloween since it started in 1959. Tom Fagan, a local writer, *Rutland Herald* reporter, and comic book fan, is credited with having a hand in the parade's early development and superhero theme beginning in 1960.

Following the first Rutland Halloween Parade's lackluster showing in 1959, a motivated Tom Fagan went to Rutland's Recreation Department, where — as he later remarked to *Alter Ego* magazine — communicated, "We should have a theme for this. Because it's Halloween and these are creatures of the night, you should have Batman as parade marshal to lead off the parade." Fagan was allowed to shape the parade in his vision, starting in 1960 with a Batman float. Soon, as Fagan recalled, "I wrote letters to *Detective Comics* saying Batman was now the leader of the Rutland Halloween Parade and we were establishing a tradition." It wasn't long before Fagan's correspondence as a fan turned into an even friendlier relationship with the creators of his favorite comics, much to the benefit of the parade. "As a long-time contributor to comic book fanzines, Fagan began to form relationships with several staff writers at DC Comics in New York City, ultimately inviting them up to Rutland to join in with the festivities," said Dom Cioffi, Marketing/Outreach of Rutland's PEGTV. According to an October 22, 2006, article by *Boston Globe* writer Peggy Shinn, "He was friends with many comic book authors and artists, most of whom hailed from New York. Fagan persuaded some of them to take part in the Rutland Halloween Parade in comic book character costumes. By 1965, a local newspaper reported that the Joker, Plastic Man, and Dr. Strange were roaming the streets of Rutland, along with Batman (presumably Fagan, but like Bruce Wayne, the Caped Crusader wouldn't divulge his identity). More comic book heroes appeared (at the parade) every year ..."

Comic book creators known to have attended the parade in the past include Steve Englehart, Gerry Conway, Marv Wolfman, Bernie Wrightson, Dennis O'Neil, Roy Thomas, Alan Weiss, and Len Wein. After each parade there was a giant Halloween Party at Fagan's residence, a mansion on the outskirts of Rutland called the Clement House. Fagan lived previously at 22 Nichols Street in Rutland, but about 1970 he moved into the Clement House (a former governor's house), and owned it up until 1975. Since 2011 it has been the Antique Mansion Bed and Breakfast.

Though Fagan is no longer directly involved in the planning of the parade, the popular event continues to this day, celebrating its 59th anniversary in 2018. Fagan attended the 2006 and 2007 parade, sitting with the judges. Fagan passed away on October 21, 2008, just short of the 2008 parade. He was 77.

## In 2007 Interview, Fagan Describes Love of Halloween, Birth of Parade

Rutland Herald - By SARAH HINCKLEY, Staff Writer - Published: October 23, 2008  
(Originally published in the Rutland Herald, Sunday, October 28, 2007)

Tom Fagan, 75, could be called a star among superheroes, a fan of phantoms or a heathen of Hallows Eve, but for many years most called him Mr. Halloween.

"I think if I pass over around Halloween time, I'll be riding in a casket in the parade," said Fagan outside his ghoulishly decorated room at the Loretto Home. "I'd be all for that, too."

It was Fagan's love of the October holiday that made the Rutland Halloween Parade into one of the most coveted costumed carnivals in the country. A couple from England is scheduling a visit to Vermont just to see the parade, according to one Shrewsbury inn owner.

Legendary tales of comic book characters caravanning past the marble and brick edifices of downtown were born from Fagan's passionate pen. Annually he would write a letter to *Detective Comics*, creators of Batman and the like, but it was the first that got the ball rolling.

"They printed that letter and that really kicked things off," said Fagan. "I was getting letters from all over the country. Each time they printed it we would get more people and more people."

Not only did his letters draw comic book character enthusiasts to the Vermont city, it also got Fagan and the parade featured in a number of strips. In 1972, the *Detective Comic's* Justice League of America, made up of Batman, Superman, The Flash, Green Lantern and Phantom Stranger, featured the group battling a demon incursion at the parade in Rutland.

Fagan's inspiration came from the first Rutland parade he watched with his daughter, in which William Ciofreddi, son of John Ciofreddi, then superintendent of the Rutland Recreation and Parks Department, dressed in a comic book costume.

"I maintain that he has to be the first comic book character," said Fagan about the start of the theatrical theme.

According to Fagan that first parade consisted of a couple of high school bands and an assortment of costumed children. But the man who had grown up loving Halloween wanted more and approached the elder Ciofreddi after the parade.

"That was good, John," Fagan remembers telling him, "but it could be better." So, Ciofreddi handed the ball over to Fagan, appointing him parade general chairman. Fagan recollects the theme of the 1960 Rutland Halloween Parade was "Creatures in the Night."

"You could come as you wanted," said Fagan. "The parade was very well received. That was supposed to be the night that people could be who they secretly wished to be."

As it grew, there were floats from comic book companies such as *Detective Comics*, *Marvel Comics*, *Comic Crusader*. Even *Mad* magazine had representation. Fagan recalls at one point there being as many as 181 different comic characters represented at the parade and celebration.

"You'd be going down the street and you'd see Aunt Jemima standing next to Ronald Reagan," he said.

Not only were the characters coming to town, but those within the comic book industry who penned their fates also joined the fun. Writers and artists arrived in Rutland for the parade and an adjoining party thrown largely in their honor for a number of years.

"All sorts of great things happened," said Fagan. "We kept building it up and building it up. I don't know how many bands at one time... You had bands that were nothing but Batman... All I know is that the parade grew and grew and grew. I certainly hope it will continue for a long, long time."

Fagan was given a seat in the judge's station at last year's parade. More than 10,000 people attended the event last year; a record number of floats have registered this year.

"I was just amazed at the crowd last time," said Fagan, who has yet to miss the Rutland Halloween Parade. "I've always seen 'em one way or another."

With less than a week to go before another cast of characters parades through the streets of downtown, Fagan watched a classic horror film in his room. Bats hung from the ceiling, a wolf posed to howl at the full moon perched upon a table. Other colorful decorations seem to scream out that this man is haunted with a love for Halloween.

"I've been collecting decorations since grammar school," said Fagan. "I used to leave them up (longer than the holiday), much to the consternation of many."

Fagan, hunched with age, wore a pair of black jeans and an orange T-shirt with the words, "Sleep all day, Party all night," framing a human outline sporting batwings.

Fagan's love for the holiday goes back to when he was two or three years old. He had attended a big Halloween party at the Colony House in Rutland for children of low-income families, according to Fagan.

"I even got permission to stay up until midnight because that's when the witch was going to fly across the face of the moon," he said. "I love it when it's close to full-moon time."

He slept through the witch's journey that night and remembers being upset.

When asked if that child's curiosity has ever been quenched, Fagan replied, "Out of the corner of my eye I've seen her fly."

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(left)  
Batman and The Scarecrow,  
1974 parade participants

Photos: Alan Bradford

(right)  
Cousin Eerie and Uncle Creepy,  
parade participants, 1974



# Rutland Scares Up Pride With 50-Year Halloween Parade

*Rutland Herald* | October 25, 2009

By KEVIN O'CONNOR - Staff Writer - [kevin.oconnor@rutlandherald.com](mailto:kevin.oconnor@rutlandherald.com)

In his last interview, Rutland Halloween Parade impresario Tom Fagan sprang his last request.

"I think if I pass over around Halloween time," he told this paper, "I'll be riding in a casket in the parade."

So when the 77-year-old died last year on Oct. 21, local leaders and his family actually considered his wish before deciding a burial couldn't be postponed that long.

Pasadena roots itself in its New Year's Rose Parade. Manhattan takes flight through Macy's Thanksgiving balloons. What makes Rutland scare up its civic pride by taking to the streets on a cold, dark night?

The nation's oldest Halloween parade is set to celebrate its 50th year Saturday. It's not the pretty-picture stuff of a Vermont Life magazine spread. But it has appeared in "Batman" and other superhero comic books and sparked its own Wikipedia entry and an official link on the Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce Web site.

"We feel it's important to have it front and center," says chamber head Thomas Donahue. "This will draw a lot of attention to the community."

Celebrating freaks at nightfall might seem strange for a municipality fighting a negative image. The New York Times once tagged Rutland a "squat, unlovely city in otherwise lovely central Vermont." Mystery writer Archer Mayor opens his novel "Gatekeeper" with a drug dealer hanging from a rusting local railroad trestle.

But the Newfane author is just one observer who sees light amid the shadows.

"There's a perverse pride in being seen as a hard-luck town," Mayor says. "I'm not saying Rutland's the bottom of the pit, but it, like some beleaguered towns that basked in the sun a long, long time ago, has taken some shots. You have managed to turn adversity to your advantage. It has gotten ingrained in Rutland's spirit to flip a finger at reality."

## 'Secretly wished'

Tom Slayton, retired editor of *Vermont Life*, has a different take. Back in 1988, he put the gritty city on his magazine's cover for a story headlined "Rutland: R is for Real." A quarter-century earlier, he was a starting reporter at the *Rutland Herald* when Fagan set him to work on parade posters and floats.

"Rutland is a place that clearly goes its own way," Slayton says from his Montpelier home, "but why it adopted Halloween is more related to Tom Fagan than any city characteristic. Tom had a romantic attachment to all things dark and squirmy."

Fagan, a journalist himself, stood on the sidelines of the first parade Oct. 31, 1960, when the city's recreation department and bands from Rutland High School and local rival Mount St. Joseph Academy escorted costumed children ("a stream of sprite-like grotesques," said the next day's paper) through downtown.

After, Fagan approached John Cioffredi, head of the recreation department.

"That was good, John," Fagan later recalled saying, "but it could be better."

Cioffredi appointed Fagan parade chairman. Fagan, in turn, opened the event to everyone.

"You could come as you wanted," Fagan remembered in 2007. "That was supposed to be the night that people could be who they secretly wished."

Fagan donned a Batman suit – "It was one of the few portrayals that had a potbelly," Slayton says – and invited prominent comic book authors and artists to join in. DC and Marvel Comics not only sent costumed superheroes but also pictured the parade in issues of "Batman," "Justice League of America" (featuring Superman and Wonder Woman) and, in 1970, "The Avengers."

"Rutland, Vermont!" the latter comic began. "Surrounded by rich marble quarries, verdant, high-peaked hillsides and far-famed ski resorts – and hardly the place where one would expect to find the Masters of Evil!"

## 'Proving the point'

Comic-book adventures eventually gave way to local characters such as Michael Durkin. A Halloween fanatic, he persuaded Bonnie Hudson to don regal 16th-century costumes and marry him Oct. 31, 1987, before joining family and friends on a float.

"Nice of you all to come to my wedding party," Durkin yelled to the crowd. (The two plan on celebrating their 22nd anniversary at this year's parade.)

In 1992, the Rutland High School Art Club poured oil on a papier-mâché globe float, not thinking the political statement would fuel public complaints.

"On Halloween, people don't mind vampires or people eating people," art teacher Steve Halford said in a resulting newspaper story, "but this is a modern evil that people find hard to swallow."

Undeterred, the Art Club kept serving up satire. In 1999, students passed out "blunder bucks" from "The Great State of Waste" while pushing a 7-foot-tall dung beetle representing the city's budget-busting transit center and failed trash incinerator. Soon after, stung city aldermen talked of barring such entries, only to learn a ban was unconstitutional.

Controlling Mother Nature has proved equally problematic. Canceling the 1962 march due to rain, parade organizers have responded to subsequent storms by postponing to the next night. But that didn't help Nov. 1, 1993, when marchers who sat out Halloween rain found themselves pelted by wind-blown snow in the most unusual event yet.

Although more than half the registered participants didn't reach the starting line, Santa Claus slid through in a candy-cane red convertible while barely clad harem girls on the Rutland Regional Medical Center's "Aladdin" float clung to gust-bent palm trees.

"Rutland loves a parade," then-Mayor Jeffrey Wennberg said from behind a defrosting windshield. "This is proving the point."

### **'The real measure'**

Two traditions are nearly as old as the parade: Its high school Pumpkin Princesses and Jack O'Lantern mystery citizen who is unmasked after children receive clues to guess his or her identity.

"You can quote me as Mr. Jack O'Lantern 2001," Donahue says at the chamber.

But those, too, often lead to more questions – particularly in 1999, when fast-food clown Ronald McDonald gave some locals indigestion as the event's first (and so far only) non-homegrown Jack O'Lantern.

The parade, annually boasting almost 100 entrants and more than 10,000 spectators, isn't the nation's largest. New York's Greenwich Village Halloween Parade has 50 bands alone and 2 million onlookers. But Rutland's is the longest-running.

"It's like Mardi Gras in October," The Boston Globe recently wrote, "with candy being tossed instead of beads."

Mayor throws the city a few complimentary words of his own. Rutland may not consider itself a mirror image of Vermont, the curmudgeonly novelist says, but such individuality is a true reflection of the independent state.

"This environment alone threatens to kill us six months of the year," Mayor adds. "If that doesn't build character, you're dead."

Others share warmer sentiments. Mary McGarry Morris, author of the million-selling Oprah's Book Club pick "Songs in Ordinary Time," graduated from Mount St. Joseph Academy just months before the first parade. Although her novels are dark – "Songs," set in Rutland in the summer of 1960, features a con artist, philandering priest, pilfering insurance agent and obscene phone caller – she doesn't have a discouraging word about her former home.

"We liked to boast, then, that Rutland was the second-largest city in the state," says Morris, now of Massachusetts, "but, really, it was a large town, rock-solid in its values, primarily in the way it watched out for its children. And that's the real measure of a community, what makes it truly great and fondly remembered."

### **'Ahead of the curve'**

Joseph Citro, a self-described "expert on New England oddities" and author of the new "Vermont Monster Guide," practically apologizes for not unearthing some Rutland peculiarity that spurs it to parade on Halloween.

"No offense, I don't know if it's anything about the city specifically," the Burlington writer says. "I think Tom Fagan just had endless energy for things strange and, after a while, it became a tradition."

One that's set to take downtown by storm (only figuratively, organizers hope) Saturday at 6:30 p.m. Neither Citro, Mayor nor Morris has marched in the parade, as the scary season is also big for book tours.

Slayton, for his part, recalls watching the spectacle in a hoodlum cap and mask inspired by the Beagle Boy burglars that shadow Scrooge McDuck. Wading into the parade itself, the retired editor says, "was beyond the edges of my comfort level."

For most others, Halloween has grown into one of the nation's biggest holidays, with nearly \$5 billion in annual sales.

"Rutland might have been on the cutting edge," Slayton says.

“And Tom Fagan was ahead of the curve,” Citro adds.

Fagan, who spent his last years in a bat-bedecked room at Rutland’s Loretto Home, never missed a march in his lifetime. And while his final request didn’t pan out, his spirit keeps parading the streets.

“I’ve always seen ’em one way or another,” Fagan said in his last interview. “I certainly hope it will continue for a long, long time.”

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## Parade Ink

**Revelries inspired many a superhero adventure**

*Rutland Herald* | October 31, 2009

By DANIEL BARLOW - Vermont Press Bureau - [daniel.barlow@rutlandherald.com](mailto:daniel.barlow@rutlandherald.com)

**MONTPELIER** — For a few years in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Rutland was placed on a superhero pedestal alongside greats such as Superman’s Metropolis and Batman’s Gotham City.

The city of 20,000 became a Mecca for superheroes, both in real life and in the comic pages of DC and Marvel, the top two comic publishers in the United States.

As children and adults dressed as their favorite superheroes in the annual Rutland Halloween Parade, the Justice League battled a villain attempting to open a dimensional demon portal above the city in the pages of an early 1970s DC comic.

“As a kid growing up in Vermont in the ’70s, the Halloween parade comics were magical to me — superheroes existed in faraway, made-up cities — even New York qualified as one of those to 6-year-old me,” said Brattleboro resident Cole Moore Odell, a comics fan. “But once a year, these characters would actually visit my backyard. It kind of blew my mind.”

The reason Rutland became a destination was resident Tom Fagan, a Rutland Herald reporter, devout Halloween fanatic and huge comic fan. The main draw was his parties held after the parade, celebrations that would often draw hundreds of people to the Clement House – an old Victorian home that once was a governor’s mansion.

“I wrote letters to *Detective Comics* saying Batman was now the leader of the Rutland Halloween Parade and we were establishing a tradition,” Fagan told famed comic editor Roy Thomas in an interview for the magazine *Alter Ego*.

Nick Marro, a retired Vermont Press Bureau reporter, remembered staying up all night before the Halloween parade with other volunteers to paint life-size float backdrops of superheroes such as Batman, Thor and the Hulk.

“Fagan was the fun guy that everyone wanted to be around,” Marro said. “His parties would go all night long.”

Fagan’s parties had a reputation of being a lot of fun. The party and the season often inspired the stories these comic creators would later tell in the comics.

Horror artist Bernie Wrightson, co-creator of the *Swamp Thing* comic, told the magazine *Comic Book Artist* that the inspiration for one of his Batman stories placed in Rutland was from one spooky night at Fagan’s party when everyone was “really drunk and stoned and we went out for a walk.”

“We start making up scary stories and, of course, we are all in this altered state of consciousness so it gets really, really creepy,” Wrightson said. “For me it was just laughs — we got lost, creeped each other out, and then came back.”

The writers and artists drawn to Rutland’s parade are considered legends in the comic industry, including Wolverine co-creator Len Wein, Punisher co-creator Gerry Conway and Neal Adams, the comic artist who would later inspire a young Vermonter by the name of Frank Miller to begin drawing his own comics.

Conway, reached at his Los Angeles home earlier this month, fondly recalled his days traveling to Vermont to party with Fagan and his friends.

“It all felt very rural,” said Conway, who grew up in New York City. “Of course, where I grew up, northern New Jersey felt rural.”

A car full of comic creators nearly got in trouble with the law during one of these trips to Rutland. Conway said he and several others, most of whom were intoxicated, got lost on the way to Fagan’s house one year and were pulled over by state police.

Wein, the driver of the car, didn’t drink or take drugs. But there were plenty of passengers in the car who did, Conway said.

“Len was really worried that he would get in trouble because he couldn’t find the car’s registration,” he said. “I remembered saying, ‘That will be the least of our worries once they search us.’”

Wein showed his driver’s license to the cops, forgetting that his wallet was a hand-me-down from a relative who was a retired police officer. When police saw the badge in Wein’s wallet, they assumed he was also an officer of the law and let the group go, Conway said.

That story never made it into the comics – but the car, which belonged to comic writer Steve Englehart, did.

In what is considered to be the first crossover between DC and Marvel comics – two companies whose rivalry are akin to the Yankees and the Red Sox – Wein and Englehart included plotlines in their comics about the car being lost and then stolen – a plot that crossed over from one company’s books to the other.

“We did this without Marvel or DC knowing,” Conway said. “They found out later and basically told us not to do that again.”

### **The following comics feature some of the key Rutland appearances of that era:**

**Avengers #83**, published December 1970; written by Roy Thomas with art by John Buscema and Tom Palmer. This is the first superhero comic to be set in Rutland. The Avengers, Marvel Comics’ main superhero team, travel to the city to guard a scientist who has developed a “parallel-time projector.” During the Halloween Parade, the superheroes are attacked by the Masters of Evil, a team of super villains.

**Batman #237**, published December 1971; written by Dennis O’Neil with art by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano. Considered by many to be one of the best Batman comic stories from the 1970s, this issue features the Dark Knight and Robin traveling to Rutland in search of an escaped Nazi war criminal who is haunted by a scythe-wielding grim reaper.

**Marvel Feature #2**, published March 1972; written by Roy Thomas with art by Ross Andru and Sal Buscema. This story centers on Bald Mountain, the 1,600-foot peak that overlooks the city. The comic features Dr. Strange, the Hulk and the Sub-Mariner fighting demon Dormammu and a group of occultists who want to open up a dimensional rift on the top of the mountain.

**Justice League of America #103**, published December 1972; written by Len Wein with art by Dick Dillin and Dick Giordano.

Superman, Batman and other members of the Justice League battle villain Felix Faust, who attempts to open a door to a demon dimension over Rutland. The heroes are later roped into leading the parade procession, a task that is interrupted by Faust, who casts a sleep spell on the crowd. The Justice League (and the citizens of Rutland) are saved by the Phantom Stranger, and Faust escapes by also stealing Englehart’s car. The villain tries to surrender to Vermont police when he is pulled over, but instead is given a ticket for having a faulty muffler.

**Thor #206-207**, published December/January 1973; written by Gerry Conway with art by John Buscema and Vince Colletta.

Villain Loki brainwashes Fagan and other partygoers at his house just as the mighty superhero Thor arrives in Rutland. A complicated tale that comes in the middle of a massive Thor story, these issues also feature The Absorbing Man, Englehart’s car going missing, and a brief battle between the hero and Fagan’s two real-life dogs, Satan and Diablo, who become possessed.

**Amazing Adventures #16**, published January 1973; written by Steve Englehart with art by Bob Brown and Frank McLaughlin.

A group of comic creators heading to Rutland for the Halloween Parade pick up a hitchhiking Beast, the furry blue scientist from the X-Men comics. Later, Fagan’s party is crashed by X-Men villain the Juggernaut, who, after losing the fight, tries to steal Englehart’s car.

# Batman Felled By Villains

*Rutland Herald* | November 1, 2009

By CRISTINA KUMKA - Staff Writer - [cristina.kumka@rutlandherald.com](mailto:cristina.kumka@rutlandherald.com)

**RUTLAND** — Robin couldn't save Batman during the real-life drama that unfolded outside the Chaffee Art Center overnight Friday.

The larger-than-life papier-mâché rendering of Batman on the front lawn outside the center — a tribute to longtime Rutland Halloween Parade chairman Tom Fagan — was taken down by vandals sometime in the night and police are looking to nab the villains, according to Rutland police and Chaffee employees.

Police Sgt. John Sly said the vandalism was all too real — no match for a fictional sidekick.

"(Robin) must have been out partying with Batgirl," Sly joked hours after police discovered that the Batman statue was lying on its head on the lawn, severed at the knees.

"It was vandalism ... not the wind," Sly said.

Pumpkins were smashed near the felled Batman, according to Chaffee Director Mary Mitiguy, and Sly said other damage was discovered in the area near the center. A cigarette receptacle at the Rutland Mental Health office at 7 Court Square was set on fire, plants were strewn in the roadway, and a torched newspaper was put in the book drop at Rutland Free Library.

Police first noticed the downed Batman at 9:45 a.m. on Halloween.

Four Rutland police officers were on duty overnight, Sly said.

All joking aside, Sly said police did catch three Rutland youths Friday night — all boys younger than 16 — in connection with the cigarette receptacle fire.

The boys were released to their parents. Alcohol wasn't a factor, Sly said.

But on Saturday with the Batman damage discovered, Sly said police would talk with the boys again.

He said police had a good starting point for the investigation and vowed to charge those responsible with felony or misdemeanor unlawful mischief, depending on the monetary value of the damage.

The Batman statue's designer, 65-year-old Steve Halford, of Rutland, had a message for the jokers who ruined his creation, six months in the making.

"The bat signal is out for the people who did this," he said.

Halford said Saturday morning that he would try to fix Batman and stand him upright again.

"That was my biggest fear, that he wouldn't make it through Cabbage Night" on Halloween eve, Halford said.

Passersby on North Main Street groaned in disappointment when they saw the fallen hero.

Chaffee volunteer Priscilla Raykoske of Wallingford said she came to the center Saturday morning hoping to see the recently installed Batman with her own eyes, but instead met disappointment.

"It's bragging rights for the other sickos," she said.

"People can just be mean."

Photo: Chaffee Art Center



## The Chaffee Art Center

(below) Photo: Rutland Herald



The fallen Batman outside the Chaffee Art Center at 16 South Main Street, Rutland

# Heroes Return To Rutland City 45 Years Later

*Rutland Herald* | May 8, 2015  
By Patrick McArdle, Staff Writer



Photo: Rutland Herald

The hit movie, “The Avengers: Age of Ultron,” is currently playing at Flagship Cinemas in Rutland, but it’s not the first time the team of superheroes has visited Rutland.

Writer Roy Thomas, who created the characters of Ultron and the Vision when he was writing the Avengers, was the first to set a story in Rutland when he wrote *Avengers* No. 83, which had a cover date of 1970.

In the story, which features a number of characters from the movie including the Vision, Scarlet Witch, Black Widow, Quicksilver, Hawkeye, but as another superhero, and Klaw, the Rutland Halloween parade is attacked by the Masters of Evil before they’re stopped by the Avengers.

Thomas, interviewed by phone at his South Carolina home, had fond memories of the circumstances that led to the story. As a writer for Marvel Comics, Thomas had gotten to know comic book fan Tom Fagan, a former reporter for the *Rutland Herald*, who died in 2008.

Fagan became well-known for promoting the Rutland Halloween parades and encouraging people to dress as superheroes, which Fagan did by wearing a Batman costume.

Thomas started attending the parades in 1965 at Fagan’s invitation and continued to attend the parade and the parties, which took place at Clement House, now called the Antique Mansion, on Grove Street.

“I decided to do a story set there and put Tom and myself and first wife, Jeannie, (in the story.) ... We did this Avengers story with the Valkyrie and the Lady Liberators characters and so forth. We set it at the Rutland parade and worked us all in as characters in a couple of scenes here and there. Didn’t make a huge deal out of it, it was just a couple of pages,” he said.

But by this time, other comic book professionals were regularly attending the parades and the parties. The next year, Thomas wrote a story in which another superhero team, the Defenders, visited Rutland in a story that played on Rutland’s proximity to Bald Mountain. The members of the Defenders are Doctor Strange, the Sub-

Mariner and the Hulk, who is also a character in the new Avengers movie.

The following year, DC Comics published a story in which Batman visits the Rutland parade. That story also featured real-life comic book creators as characters.

While Thomas said he decided to let it go after doing two superhero comic book stories set in Rutland, others returned to the setting in 1972 and brought Marvel Comics' the Beast, DC's Justice League of America and the Marvel version of Thor, yet another character in the Avengers movie, to the parade. The three stories featured some subtle similarities that allowed fans to see them as one continuous story.

Thomas said attendance by comic book professionals at the parades fell off by the mid-1970s. But Thomas said that still meant about a decade of professionals and fans making Rutland a destination and quite a few major comic book characters such as the Avengers and the Justice League making trips to Vermont.

Despite the annual visits, Thomas said, he didn't have many special memories of Rutland in general. He said he generally kept his visit to the Clement House and the parade.

But, he said, he had fond memories of people who were dressed up as comic book characters in the days long before cosplay was well known because of events such as the San Diego Comic-Con. He said it was also a nice change to socialize with other professionals.

"Usually when you go to conventions, you're surrounded by people who want to come up and have you sign a comic book or something, and that's nice, and it's gratifying and all that, but sometimes you just want to go and hang out with your peer group as opposed to having it feel like you're on display," he said.

Thomas said he hasn't had many occasions to return to Vermont since the end of his involvement with the Rutland parade.

The writer, who is no longer regularly writing the Avengers, has kept up with the superheroes as they have continued to make the transition from the comic books to the movies. Thomas was a guest at the recent world premiere of "The Avengers: Age of Ultron" in Los Angeles.

He said he found it a little darker and less accessible than the first Avengers movie.

"But still, it's kind of a celebration of this kind of world that until the last few years, never was able to exist on film. ... I thought Joss Whedon (the director and writer) and his people did a wonderful job of it. They were well-cast with (James) Spader (who played Ultron) and (Paul Bettany) playing the Vision. I thought they worked out very well," he said.

Thomas said he made Ultron "kind of a nut" with an Oedipus complex who developed from a child to an adult and Thomas saw that reflected in the movie version where Ultron sometimes acts like a "spoiled teenager."

Thomas said he thought it would be "bittersweet" to come back to Rutland now and see the Antique Mansion, which is now a bed and breakfast, or the parade route.

"I'm not that eager to do that, although once I did, I would probably at least halfway enjoy it. Some things you can't go home again with. It was a particular time and place and group of people ... It's kind of hard to duplicate again," he said.



**The Flagship  
Cinemas,  
Rutland**

# Writing On The Wall: Avengers and Pipe Dreams

*Rutland Herald* | November 2, 2015

By Gordon Dritschilo, Staff Writer

So, it's time for me to beat this drum again.

We need to find some way to get the Rutland Halloween Parade in the next Avengers movie.

The unveiling of the new mural on the side of the Gryphon Building gave me an excuse to once again write about how, for years, comic book writers would send superheroes to the Rutland Halloween Parade, an in-joke born of several writers' friendship with longtime parade organizer Tom Fagan.

We need to get this in-joke onto the big screen.

I know it's a different publisher, a different movie studio and a different everything, but if Sen. Patrick Leahy can keep getting himself into the Batman movies, maybe he can get Rutland a shout-out when "Avengers: Infinity War" starts production.

A guy can dream, can't he?

Photo: Marvel Comics



**The Avengers!**

# Word On The Street is Parade!

*Rutland Herald* | November 1, 2016

By ANDY CLARK, Staff Writer

**A.J. Marro** is the recently retired long-time photographer for the Rutland Herald. He was in his first few years with the paper when Tom Fagan, a one-time city editor at the Herald, started the annual tradition.

“Tom started the parade. My brother and I and others painted the first floats at Rotary Field House,” Marro said. “The first parade had about five or six floats.”

Fagan kept working on the parade, turned it over to the Recreation Department and, as a comic book fan, invited artists and writers he met in the industry to come to Rutland, see the parade and attend parties that started before and after the parade, Marro said. Marvel and DC Comics artists and writers got to know each other through Rutland’s parades and parties, and began to pen images of their counterparts from the other comic organization into their stories, he said. Several of them also placed Rutland and images of the city into their stories.

Marro was not only a photographer for the parades, but a costumed rider on floats. “I was the Red Skull one year, and the Grim Reaper another. We had crowds of 10,000 people lining the streets in good weather. Some of them were coming from Boston and Burlington,” Marro said.



**1974  
parade  
participant**

Photo: Alan Bradford

# Tom Fagan

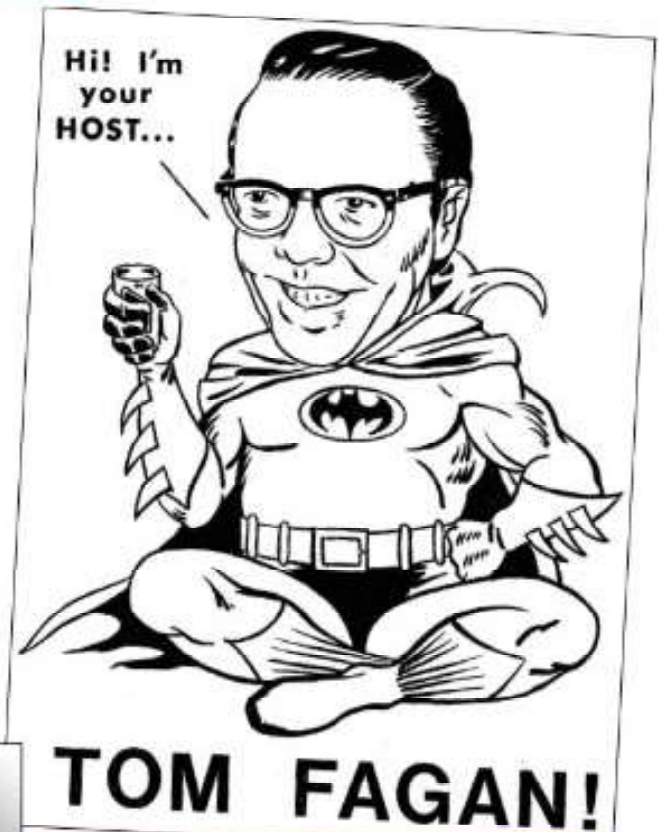
## One of Early Comic Fandom's Brightest Lights

The Passing Of A Founder Of The Rutland, Vermont, Parade

by Bill Schelly

**A**t 10:00 pm on October 21st, 2008, long-time comics fan Tom Fagan died. He was 76 years old.

A newspaper reporter and editor at the *Rutland Herald* for many years, Tom was best known in comicdom as the co-founder of the famous Halloween parade in Rutland, Vermont, which began in 1959 and continues to this day. He was also known as one of the finest authors of articles in the 1960s comics fanzines, from *Batmania* to *Alter Ego* to *Comic Crusader* (and others).



### Fagan In Fact And Fantasy

The drawing above was done for a Fagan t-shirt by Marty Greim (head) and Al Bradford (body), as repro'd by Tom Hegeman in *CAPA-alpha* magazine. The photo at right appeared on the *Rutland [Vermont] Herald* website on Oct. 13, 2008, and was supplied by Bill Schelly. For some of Tom's best 1960s fan-writing, see his short piece "Warlock" from *A/E* [vi] #5, reprinted in the TwoMorrows trade paperback *Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine*. [Art ©2009 Martin L. Greim & Al Bradford; photo ©2009 Rutland Herald.]

Though I only met Tom Fagan once (at a Comic-Con International several years ago), I feel as if I've known him since the 1960s. I originally "met" Tom in the pages of Biljo White's *Batmania* fanzine, shortly after I found out about comics fandom. He had contributed a wonderful article titled "The Big Parade" in issue #3 (1965), where he described the colorful Halloween parade in New England which had Batman as its Grand Marshal. Oh, how I wished I could have attended or participated in one of those parades, and not only because they sounded like so much fun! Tom's evocative article is a classic of its kind, and as such, I chose to reprint it in my *Comic Fandom Reader* book in 2002.

Surveying the fanzine scene of fandom's Golden Age, I think Tom was one of the very best writers, right alongside Richard Kyle, Rick Weingroff, and a few others. Perhaps to an extent that was to be expected, given his career in journalism, but there was something about his prose that went a step further than factual reportage. His skillful writing combined intelligence with a sense of wonder about the objects of our fascination. I only wish he had written more.

Roy Thomas or someone else would be better qualified to write about the now-legendary post-parade parties that Tom held in a Rutland mansion—and indeed, they were dealt with in *A/E*, Vol. 2, #3 (1999)—but

like any fan at the time, I delighted in seeing both Tom and the parade portrayed in a number of comic books in the 1970s. That made Fagan a comic book character himself, and I suspect it delighted him immensely.

Tom was viewed as an eccentric in Rutland, and was loved the more for it. A great admirer of James Dean, he wore his hair slicked back in his best imitation of Dean as Jim Stark in *Rebel without a Cause*. He also named his daughter Deana. Having come of age during the Beat generation of the 1950s, he took to wearing all black, a preference he continued for the rest of his life.

In Tom's obituary in the *Rutland Herald*, Deana Fagan is quoted as saying, "In some ways, he never stopped being a child. He enjoyed having fun. He didn't think he had to be a certain way just because of his age.... He's one of those people who made involvement in comics more likely for an adult. He made it legitimate."

We'll end our tribute to Tom's passing with this passage from Joe Latino (with his permission):

*"I attended the funeral services at the Clifford Funeral Home in Rutland on Wednesday, October 29, 2008. It was a*



dark, overcast, cold, and windy day that somehow seemed appropriate. It had actually snowed the night before. There was a crowd at the funeral home where the services were held. Tom had been cremated and the box read: "M. Thomson Fagan." It appeared to be a black lacquer box with a silver cross at the top and a simple yet elegant appearance. It also contained the year of birth and death. There were several floral arrangements, but by far and away the best was the one from the Boston Butchers with a festive Halloween theme and Batman throughout. And no other arrangement captured the Halloween flavor that Tom loved so much!"

## I Remember Tom Fagan

by Martin L. Greim

**T**om Fagan.

I first met Tom at Phil Seuling's SCARP-Con in 1969. I had recently started doing material for my friend Bob Cosgrove's fanzine *Champion*, and Bob knew him via contacts in comics fandom. I shook Tom's hand and said, "Nice to meet you, Mr. Fagan." To which he replied, "Call me TOM!" That event brought about a relationship that lasted for over thirty years.

Tom wrote a number of wonderful articles for my fanzine *Comic Crusader*, and I drew most of the art that accompanied them. I also did some of the art for articles he wrote for other fan publications. During our fan time together, Tom arranged for Bob Cosgrove, our friend Al Bradford, and myself to meet and interview the Binder brothers... Otto and Jack. Of all the interviews conducted for *Comic Crusader*, that was one of the best. Both of them had sharp memories of the Fawcett years and provided some wonderful original art to use with the piece. I certainly owed Tom a great deal for setting up that meeting.



### A Phantasmagoria Of Fagan

(Clockwise from far left) Tom working on a Halloween float in 1971—Tom as Batman in 1970, with fellow fan Sue O'Neil as Hela—and Tom with Bill Schelly at the 1998 Comic-Con International in San Diego. Batman/Tom photo provided by Al Bradford; others supplied by Bill Schelly.



Tom was also the driving force for the Rutland Halloween Parade. Many comic book professionals, myself included, went to and contributed to that event. Both Marvel and DC also did stories based in Rutland about that annual parade. When I was writing the *Thunderbunny* comic book, I did one, too. Brian Buniak, the artist on that series, did a wonderful likeness of Tom for that story. With pardonable pride, I think it was the best story done regarding the parade. Tom even supplied me with info about street layouts and the location of a certain statue that was the other focus of Rutland. It worked out very well.

As years went by, Tom grew less enchanted with comics fandom. He became more withdrawn and was injured when he was hit by a truck on a snowy Vermont evening. As a result of that accident, he was less mobile. He still enjoyed comics, but rarely replied to most fans who tried to contact him.

My fondest memory of Tom, in his later years, came about when I organized a trip to Florida so he could go to the various parks there. Our mutual friend Joe Latino, along with Bob Cosgrove and myself, did all the parks. My favorite remembrance of that trip was a picture I took of Tom with Mickey Mouse. Tom had a wonderful time. He did things that I would never dare to do. He rode on the Hulk roller-coaster.

That trip was the last time I saw Tom in person. I wrote him on a regular basis, keeping him up on new products coming out about comic



### Keeper Of Various Flames

Several more aspects of Tom Fagan, repro'd with Tom Hegeman's blessing from his *k-a* entry. (Clockwise from above left:) The cover of TH's zine, drawn in '08 by Al Bradford... a photo of Tom in his later years at James Dean's grave, taken by Joe Latino and printed by TH...and Al Bradford's pic of Fearless Fagan at a 1970s Rutland party garbed as Nighthawk, the Batman-homage Marvel character, in whose outfit Tom had been depicted in *The Avengers* #83 (Dec. 1970), the first of the comic book "Rutland stories." [Art ©2009 Al Bradford.]



### Of Mice And Men... And Rabbits

(Left:) Tom's cameo in *Thunderbunny* #5 (1986), with script by Marty Greim and art by Brian Buniak. When asked about the other folks on this page, Marty replied: "Gary Kato is real, but is way older than the kid on the page. Uncle Al is portrayed by Al Bradford. Bobby Caswell, a.k.a. Thunderbunny, is really Bob Cosgrove. Bobby's last name in the comic is Caswell because one of Bob's teacher's in high school always messed up his last name and called him that instead of Cosgrove." [©2009 Martin L. Greim.]

(Below:) Photo of Tom (center) enjoying himself at Disney World, Florida, in 2003, with Marty Greim (left) and Bob Cosgrove. Thanks to MLG for this one, too.

characters he enjoyed. Every now and then, I'd get a phone call from him, but those became fewer as time went on. Quite a bit of information I received about Tom came from Joe Latino, who helped him out with legal problems and his life in general. The most recent message I got from Joe was about Tom's demise.

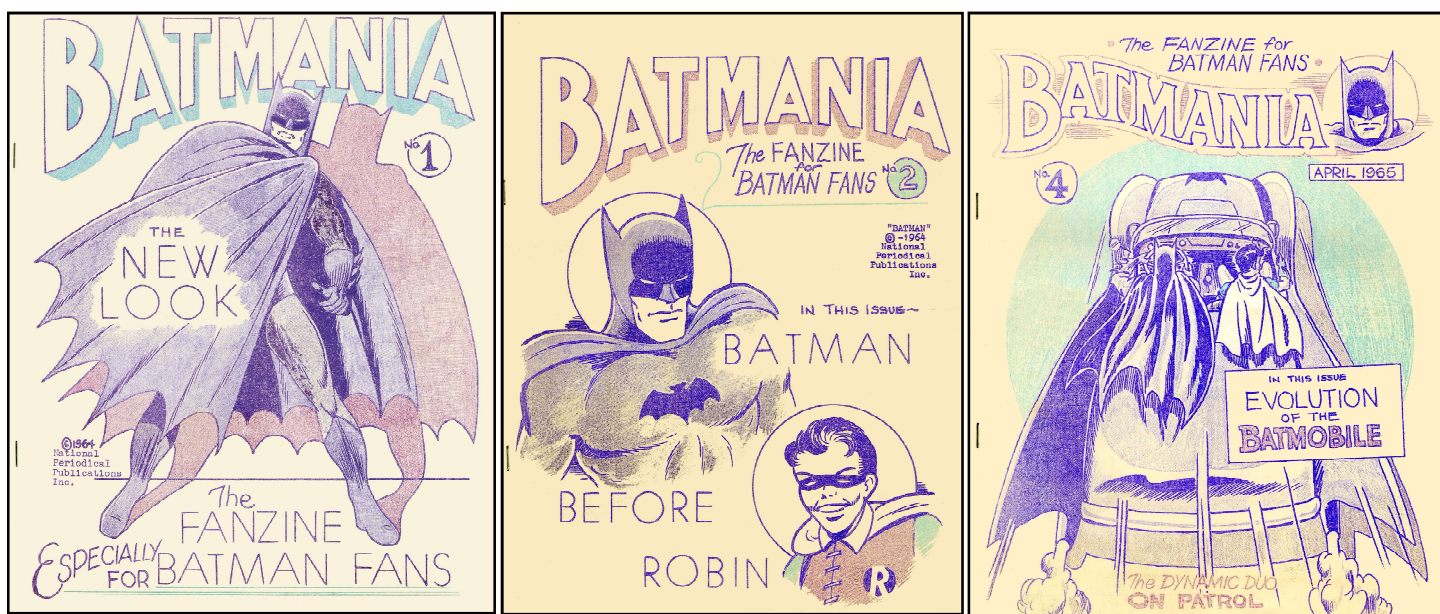
My relationship with Tom was a wonderful one. He, Bob, and I hung out with Jim Steranko at many of

the New York conventions that we all attended and talked movies and comics of old. Those days, along with the trip to Florida, remain some of my fondest memories.

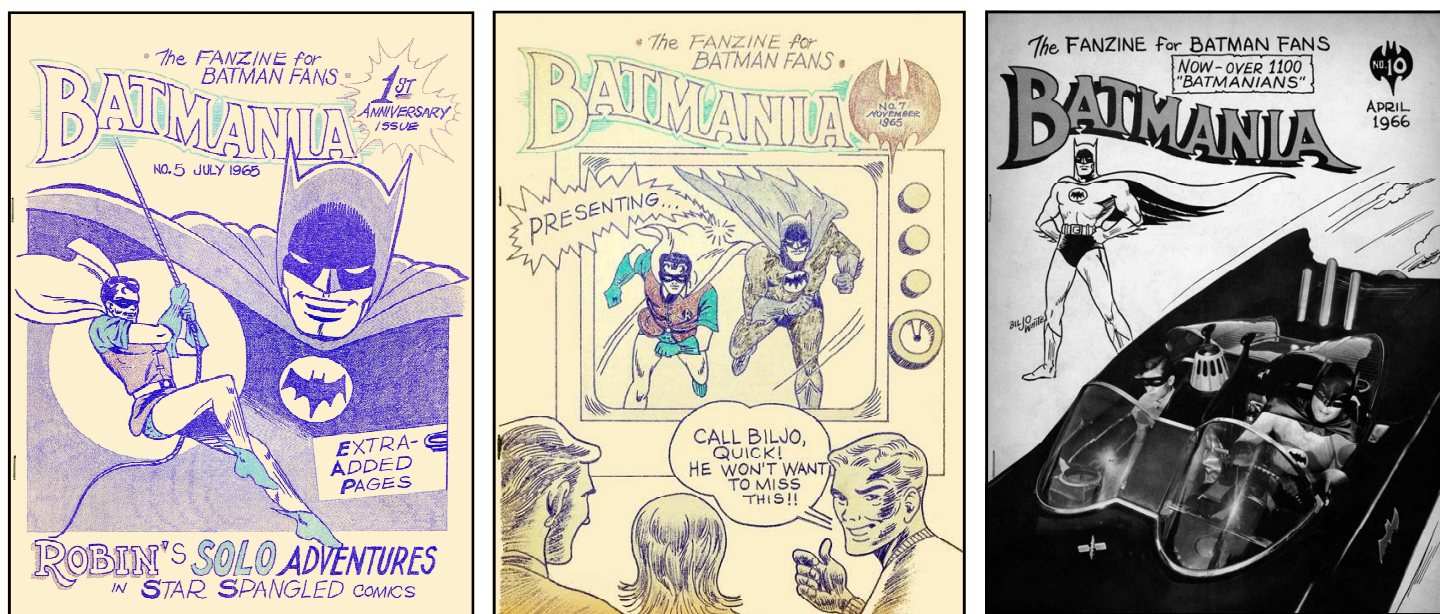


# The FANZINE for BATMAN FANS **BATMANIA**

From about 1964 to 1967 Tom Fagan was the Associate Editor of BATMANIA, and Chief Batmanian (under Biljo White of Columbia, MO, who was the fanzine's creator and editor). Below are some of the covers of that publication. It lasted until issue #17, in 1967.



All cover art by Biljo White



# A HISTORY OF THE RUTLAND, VERMONT HALLOWEEN PARADE

## • ADDENDUM AND CORRECTIONS •

The photo below was inadvertently left out of the Rutland booklet, but should have been included. It is an important photo that includes many comic book professionals (and fans) in the living room of the Clement House (Antique Mansion) in Rutland in 1969.



*From left to right, standing:*  
Tom Fagan, Andy Yanchus (DC colorist), Mark Hanerfeld (barely seen/DC editor), fanzine editor Bob Cosgrove, Dave Kaler (Charlton writer), Len Wein (DC writer), Richard Rubenfeld, Ellen Vartanoff (Marvel colorist), Roy Thomas (face hidden/DC and Marvel editor and writer), Jean Thomas (Marvel secretary).

*From left to right, seated:*  
Fanzine editors Martin & Ellie Greim, Marv Wolfman (DC writer), Michael Kreps (Marvel colorist),

**CORRECTION:** According to Roy Thomas (former editor and writer at both DC and Marvel Comics), the information included in various articles in the Rutland booklet that indicated that various comic book professionals did not start attending the Rutland Halloween Parade until the late 1960s or early 1970s is incorrect. Roy stated that he first attended the Rutland Parade in 1965 (dressed as Plastic Man), as did Dave Kaler (who worked for Charlton Comics, and was dressed as Dr. Strange). Other comic book professionals started attending the parade by 1966. They continued to participate until the mid-1970s.

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**CORRECTION:** The parade panel below (pictured on page 67) located in the Rutland Halloween Parade Museum is incorrectly captioned. It names the figure on the left as being "Captain Midnight", when in reality it is Dr. Mid-Nite, taken from a 1947 Alex Toth drawing from ALL-STAR COMICS.

